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MRS. HALLIBURTON'S TROUBLES.

A NOVEL.

By Mrs. HENRY WOOD

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"THE CHANNINGS," "EAST LYNNE," &c., &c.

VOLUME II.

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MRS. HALLIBURTON'S TROUBLES.

CHAPTER I.

A MOLE DUG BY STARLIGHT.

THE conversation at Mr. Dare's dinner table again turned upon the loss of the cheque, and the proceedings thereon. It was natural that it should turn upon it. Mr. Dare's mind was full of it; and he gave utterance to various conjectures and speculations, as they occurred to him

'In spite of what they say, I cannot help thinking that it must have been William Halliburton,' he remarked with emphasis. 'He alone was in the counting-house when the cheque disappeared; and the person, changing it at White's, is proved to bear the strongest possible resemblance to him; at all events, to his dress. The face was hidden —as of course it would be. People who attempt to pass off stolen cheques, take pretty good care that their features are not seen.'

'But who hesitates to bring it home to Halliburton?' inquired Mrs. Dare.

'They all do—as it seems to me. Ashley won't hear a word; laughs at the idea of Halliburton's being capable of it, and says we may as well accuse himself. That's nothing; as Cyril says, Mr. Ashley appears to be imbued with the idea that Halliburton can do no wrong; but now Delves has veered round. He shifts the blame entirely off Halliburton.'

'Upon whom does he shift it?' asked Anthony Dare.

'He won't say,' replied Mr. Dare. 'He has grown mysterious over it since the afternoon; nodding and winking, and giving no explanation. He says he knows who it is who possesses the second cloak.'

'The second cloak!' The words were a puzzle to most at the table, and Mr. Dare had to explain that another cloak, similar to that worn by William Halliburton, was supposed to be in existence.

Cyril looked up, with wonder marked on his face.

'Does Delves say there are two such cloaks?' asked he.

'That there are two such cloaks appears to be an indisputable fact,' replied Mr. Dare. 'The one cloak was parading behind the Halliburtons' house last night. Samuel Lynn went up to it——'

'The cloak parading tout seul—alone?' interrupted the Signora Varsini, with a perplexed air.

A laugh went round the table.

'With the wearer in it, Mademoiselle,' said Mr. Dare, continuing the account of Samuel Lynn's adventure. 'Thus the fact of their being two cloaks is established,' he proceeded. 'Still, that tells nothing; unless the owner of the other has access to Mr. Ashley's counting-house. I pointed this fact out to them. But Delves—which is most unaccountable—differed from me; and when we parted, he expressed an opinion, with that confident nod of his, that it was not Halliburton's cloak which had been in the mischief at the butcher's, but the other.'

'What a thundering falsehood!' burst forth Herbert Dare.

'*Sir!*' cried Mr. Dare, while all around the table stared at Herbert's excited manner.

Herbert had the grace to feel ashamed of his abrupt and intemperate rudeness.

'I beg your pardon, sir; I spoke in my surprise. I mean that Delves must be telling a falsehood, if he seeks to throw the guilt off Halliburton. The very fact of the fellow's wearing a strange cloak such as that, when he went to get rid of the cheque, must be proof positive of Halliburton's guilt.'

'So I think,' acquiesced Mr. Dare.

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'What sort of a cloak is this that you laugh at, and call scarce?' inquired the governess.

'The greatest scarecrow of a thing you can conceive, Mademoiselle, responded Mr. Dare. 'I had the pleasure of seeing it to-day on Halliburton. It is a dark green-and-blue Scotch plaid, made very full, with a turned up collar lined with red, and a bit of fur edging it.'

'Plaid? Plaid?' repeated Mademoiselle. 'Why it must be——'

'What?' asked Mr. Dare, for she had stopped.

'It must be very ugly,' concluded she. But somehow Mr. Dare took an impression into his mind that it was not what she had been about to say.

'What is it that Delves says about the cloaks?' eagerly questioned Cyril. 'I cannot make it out.'

'Delves says he knows who it is that owns the other, and that it was the other which went to change the cheque at White's.'

'What mysterious words, papa,' cried Adelaide. 'The cloak went to change the cheque!'

'They were Delves' own words,' replied Mr. Dare. 'He did seem remarkably mysterious over it.'

'Is he going to hunt up the other cloak?' resumed Cyril.

'I conclude so. He was pondering over it for some time before he could remember who it was that he had seen wear a similar cloak. When the recollection came to him, he started up with surprise. Keen men are these police officers,' added Mr. Dare. 'They forget nothing.'

'And they ferret out everything,' said Herbert, with some testiness in his tone. 'Instead of wasting time over vain speculations touching cloaks, why does not he secure Halliburton? It is impossible that the other cloak—if there is another—could have had anything to do with the affair.'

'I dropped a note to Delves after he left me, recommending him to follow up the suspicion on Hallibnrton, whether Mr. Ashley is agreeable or not,' said Mr. Dare. 'I have rarely in my life met with a stronger case of presumptive evidence.'

So, many, besides Mr. Dare, would have felt inclined to say. Herbert, like his father, was firm in the belief that William Halliburton must have taken the money; that it must have been he who paid the visit to the butcher. What Cyril thought may be best inferred from his actions. A sudden fear had come over him that Sergeant Delves was really going to search out the other cloak. A most inconvenient procedure for Cyril, lest in the process, the sergeant should search out *him*.

He laid down his knife and fork. He had had quite enough dinner for one day.

'Are you not hungry, Cyril?' asked his mother.

'I had a monstrous lunch,' answered Cyril. 'I can't eat more now.'

He sat at the table until they had finished, feeling that he was being choked without food, choked with dread. But that a guilty conscience deprives us of free action he would have quitted the table, and gone about some work he was now eager to do.

He rose when the rest did, looked about for a pair of large scissors, and glided with them up the staircase, his eyes and ears on the alert, lest there should be any watching him. No human being in that house had the slightest knowledge of what Cyril was about to do, or that he was going to do anything; but to Cyril's guilty conscience, it seemed that all must be on the watch out.

A candle and the scissors in his hand, he stole up to Herbert's chamber, and locked himself in. Inside a closet within the room hung a dark blue camlet cloak, and Cyril took it from the hook. It had a plaid lining; a lining of the precise pattern and colours that the material of William Halliburton's cloak was composed of. The cloak was of the same full, old-fashioned make; its collar was lined with red, tipped with fur; in short, the one cloak worn on the right side and the other worn on the wrong side, could not have been told apart. This cloak belonged to Herbert Dare; occasionally, though not often, he went out at dusk, wearing it wrong side outermost. It was he, no doubt, whom Sergeant Delves had seen wearing one. He was a little taller than William Halliburton, towering above six feet. What his motive had been in causing a cloak to be lined so that, turned, it should resemble William Halliburton's, or whether the so lining it had been accidental, was only known to Herbert himself.

With trembling fingers, and sharp scissors that were not particular where they cut, Cyril began his task—the taking out of this plaid lining. That he had worn it to the butcher's, and that he feared it might tell tales of him, were facts only too apparent. Better put it out of the way for ever! Unpicking, cutting, snipping, Cyril tore away at the lining, and at length got it out, the cloak suffering considerable damage in the shape of cuts and rents, and loose threads. Hanging the cloak up again, he twisted the lining together.

He was thus engaged when the handle of the door was briskly turned, as if some one essayed to enter who had not expected to find it fastened. Cyril dashed the lining under the bed, and made a spring to the window. To leap out? surely not: for the fall would have killed him. But he had

nearly lost all presense of mind in his perplexity and fear.

Another turn at the handle, and the steps went on their way. Cyril thought he recognised them for the housemaid's, Betsy. He supposed she was going her evening round in the chambers. Gathering the lining under his arm, he halted to think. His chest heaved, his hands shook, nnd his face was white.

What should he do with it—this tell-tale thing? He could not eat it; he dared not burn it. There was no room, of those which had fires, where he might make sure of being alone; and the smell of it, burning, would alarm the house. What was he to do with it?

Dig a hole and bury it, came a prompting voice within him; and Cyril waited for no better suggestion, but crept with it down the stairs, and out to the garden.

Seizing a spade, he dug a hole rapidly in an unfrequented place; and, when it was large enough, thrust the stuff in. Then he covered it over again, to leave the spot apparently as he found it.

'I wish those stars would give a stronger light,' grumbled Cyril, looking up at the dark blue canopy. 'I must come again in the morning, I suppose, and see that it's all safe. It wouldn't do to bring a lantern.'

Now it happened that Mr. Herbert Dare was bound on a private errand that evening. His intention was to go abroad in his cloak while he executed it. Just about the time that Cyril was putting the finishing touch to the hole, Herbert went up to his room to get the cloak.

To get the cloak, indeed! When Herbert opened the closet-door, nothing save the mutilated object just described, met his eye. A torn, cut thing, the threads hanging from it in jags. Nothing could exceed Herbert's consternation as he stared at it. He thought he must be in a dream. Was it his cloak? Just before dinner, when he came up to wash his hands, he had seen his cloak hanging there, perfect. He shook it, he pulled it, he peered at it. His cloak it certainly was; but who had destroyed it? A suspicion flashed into his mind that it might be the governess. He made but few steps to the school-room, carrying the cloak with him.

The governess was sitting there, listless enough. Perhaps she was waiting for him.

'I say, Mademoiselle,' he began, 'what on earth have you been doing to my cloak?'

'To your cloak!' responded she; 'what should I have been doing to it?'

'Look here,' he said, spreading it out before her. 'Who or what has done this? It was all right when I went down to dinner.'

She stared at it in astonishment great as Herbert had done, and threw off a volley of surprise in her foreign tongue. But she was a shrewd woman. Ay, never was there a shrewder than Bianca Varsini. Mr. Sergeant Delves was not a bad hand at ferretting out just conclusions; but she would have beaten the sergeant hollow.

'Tenez;' cried she, putting up her forefinger in thought, as she gazed down at the cloak. 'Cyril did this.'

'Cyril!'

She nodded her head.

'You stood it out to me that you did not come in on Saturday evening and go out again between ten and eleven——'

'I did not,' interrupted Herbert. 'I told you truth, but you would not believe me.'

'But this cloak went out. And it was turned the plaid side outwards, and your cap was on, tied down at the ears. Naturally I thought it was you. It must have been Cyril! Do you comprehend?'

'No, I don't,' said Herbert. 'How mysteriously you are speaking!'

'It must have been Cyril who robbed Mr. Ashley.'

'Mademoiselle!' interrupted Herbert, indignantly.

'Ecoutez, mon ami. He was blanched as white as a mouchoir, while your father spoke of it at dinner—and did you see that he could not eat? "You look guilty, Monsieur Cyril," I said to myself, not really thinking him to be so. But, be persuaded it was no other. He must have taken the paper-money—or what you call it—and come home here for your cloak and cap to wear, while he changed it for gold, thinking it would fall on that other one who wears the cloak: that William Hal—— I cannot say the name; c'est trop dur pour les lévres. It is Cyril, and no other. He has turned afraid now, and has torn the lining out.'

Herbert could make no rejoinder at first, partly through dismay, partly through astonishment. 'It cannot have been Cyril!' he reiterated.

'I say it is Cyril,' persisted the young lady. 'I saw him creep up the stairs after dinner, with a candle and your mother's great large scissors in his hand. He did not see me. I was in the dark, looking out of my room. Depend he was going to do it then.'

'Then, of all blind idiots, Cyril's the worst!—if he did take the cheque,' uttered Herbert. 'Should it get known, he is done for, and that for life. And my father helping to fan the flame!'

The governess shrugged her shoulders. 'I not like Cyril,' she said. 'I have never liked him since I came.'

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'But you will not tell against him!' cried Herbert, in fear.

'No, no, no. Tell against your brother! Why should I? It is no concern of mine. Unless people meddle with me, I don't meddle with them. Cyril is safe, for me.'

'What on earth am I to do for my cloak to-night?' debated Herbert. 'I was going—going where I want it.'

'Why you want it so to-night?' asked mademoiselle, sharply.

'Because it's cold,' responded Herbert. 'The cloak was warmer than my overcoat is.'

'Last night you go out, to-night you go out, to-morrow you go out. It is always so now!'

'I have got a lot of perplexing business upon me,' answered Herbert. 'I have no time to see about it in the day.'

Some little time longer he remained talking with her, partially disputing. The Italian, from some cause or other, went into an ill-humour, and said some provoking things. Herbert, it must be confessed, received them with good temper, and she grew more affable. When he left her, she offered to pick the loose threads out of the cloak, and hem up the bottom.

'You'll lock the door while you do it?' he urged.

'I will take it to my chamber,' she said. 'Nobody will molest me there.'

Herbert left it with her, and went out. Cyril went out. Anthony had already gone out. Mr. Dare remained at home. He and his wife were conversing over the dining-room fire in the course of the evening, when Joseph came in.

'You are wanted, please, sir,' he said to his master.

'Who wants me?' asked Mr. Dare.

'It's policeman Delves, sir.'

'Oh, show him in here,' said Mr. Dare. 'I hope something will be done in this,' he added to his wife. 'It may turn out a good slice of luck for me.'

Sergeant Delves came in. In point of fact, he had just returned from that interview with the butcher, where he had been accompanied by Mr. Ashley and William.

'Well, Delves, did you get my note?' asked Mr. Dare.

'Yes, sir, I did,' said the sergeant, taking the seat offered him. 'It's what I have come up about.'

'Do you intend to act upon my advice?'

'Why—no, I think not,' replied the sergeant. 'Not, at any rate, until I have had a talk with you.

'What will you take?'

'Well, sir, the night's cold. I don't mind a sup of brandy-and-water.'

The brandy-and-water was brought, and Mr. Dare joined his visitor in partaking of it. He agreed with him that the night was cold. But nothing could Mr. Dare make of him. So often as he turned the conversation on the subject in hand, so often did the sergeant turn it off again. Mrs. Dare got tired of listening to nothing; and she departed, leaving them together.

Then changed the manner of Sergeant Delves. He drew his chair forward; and bent towards Mr. Dare.

'You have been urging me to go against young Halliburton,' he began. 'It won't do. Halliburton no more fingered that cheque, nor had any thing to do with it, than you or me had. Mr. Dare, don't you stir in this matter any further.'

'My present intention is to stir it to the bottom,' returned Mr. Dare.

'Look here,' said the sergeant in an under tone; 'I am not obligated to take notice of offences that don't come legally in my way. Many a thing has been done in this town— ay, and is being done now—that I am obliged to wink at; it don't lay right in my duty to take notice of it; so I keep my eyes shut. Now that's just it in this case. So long as the parties concerned, Mr. Ashley, or White, don't put it into my hands officially, I'm not obligated to take so and-so into custody, or to act upon my own suspicions. And I won't do it upon suspicions of my own: I promise it. If I am forced, that's another matter.'

'Are you alluding to Halliburton!'

'No. You are on the wrong scent, I say.'

'And you think you are on the right one?'

'I could put my finger out this night and lay it on the fox. But I tell you, sir, I don't want to, unless I am compelled. Don't *you* compel me, Mr. Dare, of all the people in the world.'

Mr Dare leaned back in his chair, his thumbs in his waistcoat arm-holes. No suspicion of the truth had come across him, and he could not understand either the sergeant or his manner. The latter rose to depart.

'The other cloak, similar to young Halliburton's, belongs to your son Herbert,' he whispered, as he passed Mr. Dare. 'It was his brother Cyril who wore it on Saturday night, and who changed the cheque: therefore we may give a guess as to who took the cheque out of Mr. Ashley's desk. Now you be still over it, sir, for his sake, as I shall be. If I can, I'll call at your office to-morrow, Mr. Dare, and talk further. White must have the money refunded to him, or *he* won't be still.'

Anthony Dare fell into a confused maze of horror and consternation, leaving the sergeant to bow himself out. Mrs. Dare heard the departure, and returned to the room.

'Well,' cried she, briskly, 'is he going to accuse Halliburton?'

Mr. Dare did not answer. He looked up in a beseeching, helpless sort of manner, as one who is stunned by a blow.

'What is the matter?' she questioned, gazing at him closely. 'Are you ill?'

He rose up shaking, as if a trembling fit were on him. 'No—no.'

'Perhaps you are cold,' said Mrs. Dare. 'I asked you what Delves was going to do. Will he accuse Halliburton?'

'Be still!' sharply cried Mr. Dare, in a tone of pain. 'The matter is to be hushed up. It was not Halliburton.'

CHAPTER II.

A PRESENT OF TEA-LEAVES.

How went on Honey Fair? Better and worse, better and worse, according to custom; the worse prevailing over the better.

Of all its inhabitants, none had advanced so well as Robert East. Honestly to confess it, that is not saying much, since the greater portion, instead of advancing in the world's social scale, had retrograded. Robert had quitted the manufactory he had worked for, and was now second foreman at Mr. Ashley's. He was also becoming through self-perseverance an excellent scholar in a plain way. He had one friend to help him, and that was William Halliburton.

The Easts had removed to a better house; one of those which had a garden in front of it. The Fishers had never come out of the workhouse, and Joe was dead. The Crosses, turned from their home, their furniture sold, had found lodgings; two rooms. The Masons, man and wife, passed their time agreeably in quarrels. At least, that it was agreeable may be assumed, for the quarrels were going on perpetually. The children were growing up without training, and Caroline—ah! I don't know that's it of much good asking after her. She lived in a garret alone. She had lived so a long while; and she worked her fingers to the bone to keep body and soul together, and went about with her head down. The Carters thrived; the Brumms also, better than they used to do; and the Buffles so excellently, that a joke went about that they would be retiring on their fortune: but the greater portion of Honey Fair was full of scuffle, trouble, and improvidence.

William Halliburton frequently found himself in Honey Fair. It was the most direct road from his house to that of Monsieur Colin, the French master. William, sociably inclined by nature, had sometimes dropped in at one or other of the houses. He would find Robert East labouring at his books much more than he need have laboured had some little assistance been afforded him in his progress. William good-naturedly undertook to supply it. It became quite a common thing for him to go round and pass an hour with the Easts and Stephen Crouch.

The unpleasant social features of Honey Fair thus obtruded themselves on William Halliburton's notice; it was impossible that anybody, passing much through Honey Fair, should not be struck with them. Could nothing be done to rescue the people from this debased condition?—and a debased one it was, compared with what it might have been. Young and inexperienced as he was, it was a question that sometimes rose to William's mind. Dirty homes, scolding mothers, ragged and pining children, rough and swearing husbands! Waste, discomfort, evil. The women laid the blame on the men; they reproached them with 'sotting' away their evenings and their money at the public-house. The men retorted upon the women, and said they had not a home fit for 'a pig to come into.' Meanwhile the money, whether earned by husband or wife, *went*. It went somehow, bringing apparently nothing to show for it, and the least possible return of equivalent good. Thus they struggled and squabbled on, their lives little better than one continuous scene of scramble, discomfort and toil. At a year's end they were not in the least bettered, not in the least raised, whether socially, morally, or physically, from what their condition had been at the year's beginning. Nothing had been achieved; save that they were one year nearer to the great barrier which separates time from eternity.

Ask them what they were toiling and struggling for. They did not know. What was their end, their aim? They had none. If they could only rub on, and keep body and soul together, (as poor Caroline Mason was trying to do in her garret,) it appeared to be all they cared for. They did not endeavour to lift up their hopes or their aspirations above that; they were willing so to go on until death should come. What a life! What an end!

A feeling would now and then come over William that he might in some way help them to attempt better things. To do so was a duty which seemed to be lying across his path, that he might pick it up and make it his. How to set about it, he knew no more than the man in the moon. Now and then disheartening moments would come upon him. To attempt to put the renovating broom to the evils of Honey Fair, appeared a

far more formidable task than the cleansing of the stables of Augeas could ever have appeared to Hercules. He knew that any endeavour, whether on his part or on that of others, who might be far more experienced and capable than he, would be utterly fruitless, unless the spring to exertion, to strive to do better, should be first born within themselves. Ah, my friends! the exerting aid of others may be looked upon as a great thing; but without self-struggle and self-help, little good will be effected.

One evening, in passing the house partially occupied by the Crosses, the door was flung violently open, a girl of fifteen flew shrieking out, and a saucer of wet tea-leaves came flying after her. The tea-leaves alighted on the girl's neck, just escaping the arm of William. It was the youngest girl of the family, Patty. The tea-leaves had come from Mrs. Cross. Her face was red with passion, her tongue loud with it; the girl, on her part, was insultingly insolent and abusive. Mrs. Cross had her hands stretched out to scratch, or tear, or pull hair, as might be convenient, and a personal skirmish would inevitably have ensued, but for the accident of William's being there. He received the hands upon his arm, and contrived to detain them there.

'What's the matter, Mrs. Cross?'

'Matter!' raved Mrs. Cross. 'She's a idle, impedent, wicked huzzy—that's what's the matter. She knows I've got my gloving to get in for Saturday, and not a stroke'll she help. There be the tater dishes a-lying dirty from dinner, there be the tea-cups a-lying from tea and touch 'em she won't. She expects me to do it, she do, and me with my gloving to find 'em in food! I took hold of her arm to make her do it, and she turned and struck at me, she did, the good-for-nothing faggot! I hope none on it didn't go on you, sir,' added Mrs. Cross, somewhat modifying her voice, and stopping to recover breath.

'Better that it had gone on my coat than Patty's neck,' replied he, in a good-natured, half-joking tone; though, indeed, the girl, with her evil look at her mother, her insolent air, stood there scarcely worth his defence. 'If my mother asked me to wash tea-things or do anything else, Patty, I should do it, and think it a pleasure to help her,' he added, to the girl.

Patty pushed her hanging hair behind her ears, and turned a defying look upon her mother. Hidden as she had thought it was from William, he saw it.

'You just wait,' nodded Mrs. Cross, in answer as defiant. 'I'll make your back smart by-and-by.'

Which of the two was the more in fault? It was hard to say. The girl had never been brought up to know her duty, or to do it: the mother, from her earliest childhood, had given abuse and blows; no persuasive, kind words; no training. Little wonder, now Patty was growing up, that she turned again. It was the usual mode of maternal government throughout Honey Fair. In these, and such like cases, where could interference or counsel avail, unless the spirit of the mothers and the daughters could be changed?

William walked on, after the little episode of the tea-leaves. He could not help contrasting these homes with his home; their life with his life. He was addicted to reflection beyond his years, and he wished these people could be aroused to somewhat of improvement both in mind and body. They were *so* living for no end; they were toiling only to satisfy the wants of the day—nay, to stop the wants, more than to satisfy them. How many of them were so much as thinking of another world? Their turmoil in this was too great for them to cast a thought to the next.

'I wonder,' mused William, as he stepped towards M. Colin's, 'whether some of the better conducted of the men might not be induced to come round to East's in an evening? It might be a beginning, at any rate. Once wean the men from the public-houses, and there's no knowing what reform might be effected. I would willingly give an hour or two of my evenings up to them!'

His visit to M. Colin over, he retraced his steps to Honey Fair, and turned into Robert East's. It was past eight then. Robert and Stephen Crouch were home from work, and were getting out their books. Charlotte sat by, at work as usual, and Tom East was pulling Charlotte's head towards him, to whisper something to her.

'Robert,' said William, speaking impulsively, the moment he entered, 'I wonder whether you could induce a few of your neighbours to come here of an evening?'

'What for, sir?' asked Robert, turning round from the book-shelves where he stood, searching for some book.

'It might be so much better for them. It might end in being so. I wish,' he added, with sudden warmth, 'we could get all Honey Fair here!'

'All Honey Fair!' echoed Stephen Crouch, in astonishment.

'I mean what I say, Crouch.'

'Why, sir, the room wouldn't hold them! Nor a quarter of them; nor a tenth!'

William laughed. 'No, that it would not, speaking practically. There is so much discomfort around us, and—and ill-doing—I must call it so, for want of a better name—that I sometimes wish we could mend it a little.'

'Who mend it, sir?'

'Anybody that would try. You two'—address-

ing both the men collectively—'might help towards it. If you could seduce a few round her and get them to be interested in what lies you evening interest—books, and rational conversation—so as to wean them from the public-houses it would be a great thing.'

'There'd never be any good done with the men take them as a whole, sir. They are an ignorant, easy-going lot, not caring to be better.'

'That's just it, Crouch. They don't care to be better. But they might be taught to care. It would be a most desirable thing if Honey Fair could be brought to spend its evenings as you spend yours. If the men gave up spending their money, and reeling home after it: and the women kept tidy hearths and civil tongues. As Charlotte does,' he added, looking round at her.

'There's no denying that, sir.'

'I think something might be done. By degrees you understand; not in a hurry. Were you to take the men by storm—to say, 'We want you to lead changed lives, and are going to show you how to do it,' you would make your movement for nothing, and get laughed at into the bargain. Say to the men, 'You shan't go to the public-house, because you waste your time, your money, and your temper,' and, rely upon it, it would have the same effect as if you spoke to the wind. But get them to come here as a sort of agreeable change, an invitation out, if you can understand that, and you may secure them for good, if you make the evenings pleasant to them. In short, give them some employment or attraction that will outweigh the attractions of the public-house.'

'It would be a good thing,' said Stephen Crouch, musingly. 'They might be for trying to rise up of themselves then.'

'Ay,' spoke William, with enthusiasm. 'Once let them find the day-spring within themselves, the wish to do right, to be elevated above what they now are, and the rest will be easy. When once that day-spring can be found, a man is made. God never sent a man here, but he implanted that within him. The difficulty is, to awaken it.'

'And it is not always done, sir,' said Charlotte, lifting her face from her work with a kindling eye, a heightened colour. *She* had found it.

'Charlotte, I fear it is rarely done, instead of always. It lies pretty dormant, to judge by appearances, in Honey Fair.'

William was right. It is an epoch in a man's life, the finding what he had not inaptly called the day-spring. Self-esteem, self-reliance, the courage of long-continued patience, the striving to make the best of the mind's good gifts—all are born of it. He who possesses it may soar to a bright and a happy lot, bearing in mind—may he always bear it!—the rest and reward promised hereafter.

'At any rate, it would be giving them a chance, as it seems to me,' observed William. 'I think I know one who would come, Andrew Brumm.'

'Ah *he* would and glad,' replied Robert East. 'He is different from many of them. I know another that would, sir; and that's Adam Thorncroft.'

Charlotte buried her head over her work.

'Since that cousin of his died of *delirium tremens*, Thorncroft has said good-bye to the public-houses. He spends his evenings at home with his mother, but I know he would like to spend them here. Tim Carter would come, sir.'

'If Mrs Tim will let him,' put in Tom East, saucily. And there was a laugh round.

'Ever so few, to begin with, will set the example to others,' remarked William. 'There's no knowing what it may grow to. Small beginnings make great endings. I have talked with my mother about Honey Fair. She has always said: 'Before Honey Fair's conduct will be better, its minds must be better.''

'There will be the women yet, sir,' spoke Charlotte. 'If they are to stop as they are, it will be of little use the men's doing anything for themselves.'

'Charlotte, I say there's no knowing where the work may end, once begun,' he gravely answered.

The rain, which had been threatening all the evening, was coming down pretty smartly as William walked through Honey Fair on his return. Standing against a shutter near his own door, was Jacob Cross. 'Good night, Jacob,' said William.

'Good night, sir,' answered Jacob, his air a sullen one.

'Are you standing in the rain that it may make you grow, as the children say?' asked William, in his ever pleasant tone.

'I'm a-standing here 'cause I have got nowhere else to stand,' said the man, his voice full of resentment. 'I be turned out of our room, and I have got no money for the Horned Ram.'

'A good thing you have not,' thought William. 'What has turned you from your room?' he asked.

'I be turned out, sir, by the row there is in it. Our Mary Ann's come home.'

'Mary Ann?' repeated William, not quite understanding.

'Our Mary Ann, what took and married Ben Tyrrell. A fine market she have brought her pigs to!'

'What has she done?' questioned William.

'She have done enough,' wrathfully answered

Cross 'We told her when she married Tyrrett that he was nothing but a jobber, at fifteen shillings a-week—which it's all he was, sir, as you know. "Wait," I says to her, 'somebody better nor him'll turn up." Her mother says "Wait." Others says "Wait." No, not she; the girls be all marrying mad. Well, she took her own way she would take it; and they got married, and set up upon nothing. Neither of 'em had saved a two-penny piece; and Ben, him fond of the public; and our Mary Ann, her fond of laziness and finery, and not knowing how to keep house no more nor her young sister Patty did.'

William remembered the little interlude of that evening in which Miss Patty had played her part. Jacob continued—

'It was all fine and sunshiny with 'em for a few days or a few weeks, till the novelty wears off, and then they finds things going cranky. The money, *that* begins to run short; and Mary Ann she finds that Ben likes his glass; and Ben, he finds that she's just a doll, with no gumption nor management inside of her. They quarrels—naterally, and they comes to us to settle it. "You was both red-hot for the bargain," says I, "and you must just make the best of it, and of one another." And so they went back: and it have gone on till this, quarrelling continual. And now he have took to beat her, and home she have come to-night, not half an hour ago, with her three children and a black eye, a-vowing as she'll stop at home, and won't go back to him again. And she and her mother's having words over it, and the babbies is a-squalling—enough, the noise is, to raise the ceiling off, and I come away out of it. I wish I was dead, I do!'

Jacob's account of the noise was scarcely exaggerated. It penetrated to where they stood two or three houses off. William had moved closer, that the umbrella might give Cross part of its shelter. 'Not a very sensible wish that of yours, is it, Cross?' remarked he.

'I have wished it long, sir, sensible or not sensible. I slaves away my days, and have got nothing but a pigsty to step into at home, and angry words in it. A nice place, that is, for a tired man! I can't afford the public more nor three or four nights in a week; not that, always. They be getting corky at the beer-shops, now-a-days, and won't give no trust. Wednesday this is; Thursday, to-morrow; Friday, next night: three nights, and me without a shelter to put my head in!'

'I should like to take you to one to-morrow night,' said William. 'Will you go with me?'

'Where's it to?' ungraciously asked Cross.

'To Robert East's. You know how he and Frenchi spend their evenings. There's always something going on there interesting and pleasant.'

'Crouch and East don't want me.'

'Yes, they do. They will be only too glad if you, and a few more intelligent men, will join them. Try it, Cross. There's a warm room to it in at all events, and nothing to pay.'

'Ah, it's all very fine for them East's! We don't have their luck. Look at me! Down in the world.'

William put his hand on the man's shoulder. 'Why should you be down in the world?'

'Why should I?' repeated Cross, in surprise. 'Because I be,' he logically answered.

'That is not the reason. The reason is, because you do not try to rise.'

'It's no use trying.'

'Have you ever tried!'

'Why, no! How can I try?'

'You wished just now that you were dead. Would it not be better to wish to live?'

'Not such a life as mine.'

'But, to wish to live, would seem to imply that it must be a better life. And why need your life be so miserable? You gain fair wages; your wife earns money. Altogether I suppose you must have twenty-six or twenty-eight shillings per week——'

'But there's no thrift with it,' burst forth Cross. 'It melts away somehow. Afore the middle of the week comes, it's all gone.'

'You spend some at the Horned Ram, you know,' said William, not in a reproving tone, but a joking one.

'She squanders away in rubbish more than that,' was Jacob's answer—with a turn of his thumb towards his house, and not at all an honourable stress upon the 'she.'

'And get nothing satisfactory to show for, in return, either of you. Try another plan, Jacob.'

'I'd not be back'ard—if I could see one to try,' said he, after a pause.

'You be here at half-past eight to-morrow evening, and I will go in with you to East's. If you cannot see any better way, you can spend a pleasant evening. But now, Jacob, let me say a word to you, and do you note it. If you do find the evening pass agreeably, go the next evening, and the next; go always. You can't tell all that may arise from it, in time. I know of one thing that will.'

'What's that, sir?'

'Why, that instead of wishing yourself dead, you will get to think life short, for the good you find in it.'

He went on his way. Jacob Cross, deprived of the umbrella's shelter, stood in the rain as be-

fore, and looked after him indulging his reflections.

'He is a young man, and things wears their bright side to him But he have got a cordial way with him, and don't look at folks as if they was dirt.'

And that had been the origin of the holding *soirées* at Robert East's. By degrees ten or a dozen men took to go, and—what was more—to like to go, and to find an interest in it. It was a vast improvement upon the Horned Ram.

CHAPTER III.

HENRY ASHLEY'S OBJECT IN LIFE.

On one of the warm bright days that we sometimes get in the month of February, all the more bright from their contrast to the passing winter, William Halliburton was walking home to tea from the manufactory, and overtook Henry Ashley limping along. Henry was below the middle height, and slight in form, with the same beautiful face that had marked his boyhood, delicately refined in feature, bright in colour; the same two upright lines of pain, knit in the smooth white brow.

'Just the man I wanted,' said he, linking his arm within William's. 'You are a good help up a hill, and I am tired and hot.'

'Wrapped up in that coat, with its fur lining, I should think you are! I have doffed my elegant cloak, you see, to day'

'Is it off to the British Museum?'

William laughed. 'I have not had time to pack it.'

'I am glad I met with you. You must come home to tea with me. Well? Why are you hesitating? You have no engagement?'

'Nothing more than usual. My studies——'

'You are study-mad!' interrupted Henry Ashley. 'What do you want to be? A Socrates? An Admiral Crichton?'

'Nothing so formidable. I want to be a useful man.'

'And you make yourself an accomplished one, as a preliminary step. Mary took up the fencing-sticks for you yesterday Herbert Dare was at our house—some freak is taking him to be a pretty constant visitor just now—and the talk turned upon Frank. 'You know,' broke off Henry in his quaint way, 'I never use long words when short ones will serve: you learned ones would say "conversation." Mr. Keating had said to my father that Frank Halliburton was a brilliant scholar, and I retailed it over to Herbert. I knew it would put him up, and there's nothing I like half so much as to *rile* the Dares, Herbert sneered. "And he owes it partly to William," I went on, 'for if Frank's a brilliant scholar, William's a brillianter'" "William Halliburton a brilliant scholar!" stormed scornful Herbert. "Has he learnt to be one in the egg-tub? So long as he knows how gloves are made, that's enough for him. What does he want with the acquirements of gentlemen?" Up looked Miss Mary; her colour rising, her eyes flashing She was at her drawing: at which, by the way, she makes a poor hand; nothing to be compared to Anna Lynn. "William Halliburton has forgotten more than you ever learnt, Herbert Dare," cried she; "and there's more of the true gentleman in his little finger than there is in your whole body." "There's for you, Herbert Dare," whistled I; "but it's true, lad, like it or not as you may." Herbert *was* riled.'

Henry turned his head as he concluded, and looked up at William. A gleam of light like a sunbeam had flashed into William's eyes; a tingling red to his cheeks.

'Well?' cried Henry, sharply, for William did not speak. 'Have you nothing to say?'

'It was generous of Miss Ashley.'

'I don't mean to that Oh dear!' sighed Henry, who appeared to be in one of his fitful moods; 'who is to know whether things will turn out crooked or straight in this world of ours. What objection have you to coming home with me for the evening? That's what I mean.'

'None. I can give up my books for a night, bookworm as you think me. But they will expect me at East's.'

'Happy the man that expecteth nothing!' responded Henry. 'Disappoint them.'

'"As for disappointing them, I shouldn't so much mind, but I can't abide to disappoint myself,"' returned William, quoting from Goldsmith's good old play, of which both he and Henry were fond.

'You don't mean to say it would be a disappointment to you, the not giving the lesson, or whatever it is, to those working chaps!' uttered Henry Ashley.

'Not as you would count disappointment. When I do not get round in an hour, it seems as a night lost. I know the men like to see me; and I am always fearing that we are not sure of them.'

'You speak as though your whole soul were in the business,' returned Henry Ashley.

'I think my heart is in it.'

Henry looked at him wistfully, and his tone grew serious. 'William, I would give all I am worth, present, and to come, to change places with you.'

'To change places with me!' echoed William, in very surprise.

'Yes; for you have an object in life. You may have many. To be useful in your generation is one.'

'And so may you have objects in life.'

'With this encumbrance!' He stamped his lame leg, and a look of keen vexation settled itself in his face. 'You can go forth into the world with your strong limbs, your unbroken health; you can work, or you can play; you can be active, or you can be still, at will. But what am I? A poor weak creature; infirm of temper tortured by pain, condemned half my days to the monotony of a sick-room. Compare my lot with yours!'

'There are those who would *choose* your lot in preference to mine, were the option given them,' returned William. 'I must work. It is a duty laid upon me. You can play.'

'Thank you! How?'

'I am not speaking literally. Every good and pleasing thing that money can purchase is at your command. You have but to enjoy them, so far as you may One, suffering as you do bears not upon him the responsibility to *use* his time, that a healthy man does. Lots, in this world, Henry, are, as I believe, pretty equally balanced. Many would envy you your calm life of repose.'

'It is not calm,' was the abrupt rejoinder. 'It is disturbed by pain and aggravated by temper; and—and—tormented by uncertainty'

'At any rate, you can subdue the one.'

'Which, pray?'

'The temper. Henry'—dropping his voice—'a victory over your own temper may be one of the few obligations laid upon you.'

'I wish I could live for an object,' grumbled Henry.

'Come round with me to East's sometimes.'

'I—dare say!' retorted Henry, when he could find his amazed tongue. 'Thank you again, Mr. Halliburton.'

William laughed But he soon resumed his seriousness. 'I can understand that for you, the favoured son of Mr. Ashley, reared in your refinement and exclusiveness——'

'Enshrined in pride—the failing that Helstonleigh is pleased to call my besetting sin; sheltered under care and coddling so great, that the very winds of heaven are not suffered to visit my face too roughly!' was the impetuous interruption of Henry Ashley. 'Come! bring it all out. Don't, from motives of delicacy, keep in any of my faults, or virtues, or advantages!'

'I can understand, I say, why you are willing to break through the reserve of your home at

William calmly continued. 'But, if you did so, you might no longer have to complain of the want of an object to live for.'

At this moment they came in view of William's home. Mrs Halliburton happened to be at one of the windows. William nodded his greeting, and Henry raised his hat. Presently Henry began again:

'Pray, do you join the town in its gratuitous opinion, that Henry Ashley, of all in it, is the proudest amid the proud?'

'I do not find you proud,' said William.

'You! As far as you and I are concerned, comparatively, I think the boot might be upon the other leg. You might set up for proud over me.'

William could not help laughing. 'Putting joking aside, my opinion is, Henry, that your shyness and sensitiveness are in fault; not your pride. It is your reserve of manner alone which has caused Helstonleigh to take up the impression that you are unduly proud.'

'Right, old fellow!' returned Henry, in an emphatic tone. 'If you knew how far I and pride stand apart—but let it pass.'

Arrived at the entrance to Mr. Ashley's, William threw open the gate for Henry, retreating himself. 'I must go home first, Henry. I won't be a quarter of an hour.'

Henry looked cross. 'Why on earth, then, did you not go in as we passed? What was the use of your coming up here, to go back again?'

'I thought my arm was helping you.'

'So it was. But—there! don't be an hour.'

As William walked rapidly back, he met the carriage of Mrs. Ashley. She and Mary were inside. Mrs. Ashley nodded as he raised his hat, and Mary glanced at him with a smile and a heightened colour. She had grown up to excessive beauty.

A few moments, and William met beauty of another style—Anna Lynn. Her cheeks were the same flushed, dimpled cheeks of her childhood; the same sky-blue eyes gleaming from between their long dark lashes; the same profusion of silky brown hair; the same gentle, sweetly modest manners. William stopped to shake hands with her.

'Out alone, Anna?'

'I am on my way to take tea with Mary Ashley.'

'Are you? We shall meet there then.'

'That will be pleasant. Fare thee well for the present William.'

She continued her way. William ran in home, and up to his chamber. Dressing himself hastily, he went to the room where his mother sat, and stood before her.

'Does my coat fit, mother?'

'Why, where are you going?' she asked.

'To Mrs. Ashley's. I have put on my new coat. Does it fit? It seems easy'—throwing up his arms.

'Yes, it fits. I think you are getting a dandy. Go along. I must not look at you too long.'

'Why not?' he asked in surprise.

'Lest I grow proud of my eldest son. And I would rather be proud of his goodness than his looks.'

William, laughing, gave his mother a farewell kiss. 'Tell Gar I am sorry he will not have me at his elbow this evening, to find fault with his Greek. Good-bye, mother dear.'

In truth, there was something remarkably noble in the appearance of William Halliburton. As he entered Mrs. Ashley's drawing-room, the fact seemed to strike upon Henry with unusual force, who greeted him from his distant sofa.

'So, that's what you went back for!—to make yourself look like a buck!' he called out as William approached him. 'As if you were not well enough before! Did you dress for me, pray?'

'For you!' laughed William. 'That's good!'

'In saying "me," I include the family lot,' returned Henry, quaintly. 'There's nobody else to dress for.'

'Yes, there is. There's Anna Lynn.'

Now, in good truth, William had no covert meaning in giving this answer. The words rose to his lips, and he spoke them lightly. Perhaps he could have given a very different one, had he been compelled to speak out the inmost feeling of his heart. Strange, however, was the effect on Henry Ashley. He grasped William's arm with emotion, and pulled his face over him as he lay.

'What do you say? What do you mean?'

'I mean nothing particular. Anna is here.'

'You shall not evade me, gasped Henry. 'I must have it out, now or later. WHAT is it that you mean?'

William stood, almost confounded. Henry was evidently in painful excitement; every vestige of colour had forsaken his sensitive countenance, and his white hands shook as they held William.

'What do *you* mean?' William whispered 'I said nothing to agitate you thus, that I am aware of. Are we at cross purposes?'

A bright spot, bright as any carmine, began to flush into the invalid's pale cheeks, and he moved his face so that the light did not fall upon it.

'I'll have it out, I say. What is Anna Lynn to you?'

'Nothing,' answered William, a smile parting his lips.

'What is she to you?' reiterated Henry, his tone painfully earnest.

William edged himself on to the sofa, so as to cover Henry from the gaze of any eyes that might be directed to him from the other part of the room. 'I like Anna very much,' he said, in a clear, low tone; 'almost as I might like a sister; but I have no love for her, in the sense you would imply—if I am not mistaking your meaning. And I never shall have.'

Henry looked at him wistfully. 'On your honour?'

'Henry! was there need to ask it? On my honour, if you will.'

'No, no; there was no need: you are always truthful. Bear with me, William! bear with my infirmities.'

'My sister, Anna Lynn might be, and welcome. My wife, never.'

Henry did not answer. His face was growing damp with physical pain.

'You have one of your spasms of suffering coming on!' breathed William. 'Shall I get you anything?'

'Hush! only sit there, to hide me from them: and be still.'

William did as he was requested, sitting so as to screen him from Mrs. Ashley and the rest. He held his hands, and the paroxysm, sharp while it lasted, passed away. Henry's very lips had grown white with pain.

'You see what a poor wretch I am!'

'I see that you suffer,' was William's compassionate answer.

'From henceforth there is a fresh bond of union between us, for you possess my secret. It is what no one else in the world does. William, *that's* my object in life.'

William did not reply. Perplexity was crowding on his mind, shading his countenance.

'Well!' cried Henry, beginning to recover his equanimity, and with it his sharp retorts. 'What are you looking blue at?'

'Will it be smooth sailing for you, Henry, with Mr. Ashley?'

'Yes, I think it will,' was the hasty rejoinder: its very haste, its fractious tone, proving that Henry was by no means so sure as he would imply. 'I am not as others are: therefore he will let minor considerations yield to my happiness.'

William looked uncommonly grave. 'Mr Ashley is not all,' he said, arousing from a reverie. 'There may be difficulties elsewhere. She must not marry out of their own society. Samuel Lynn is one of the strictest members of it.'

'Rubbish! Samuel Lynn is my father's servant, and I am my father's son. If Samuel should take a straight-laced fit, and hold out, why, I'll turn broadbrim.'

'Samuel Lynn is my father's servant!' In that

very fact, William saw cause to fear that it might not be such plain sailing with Mr. Ashley, as Henry wished to anticipate. He could not help looking the doubts he felt. Henry observed it.

'What's the matter again?' he peevishly asked. 'I do think you were born to be the plague of my life! My belief is, you want her for yourself.'

'I am only anxious for you, Henry I wish you could have assured yourself that it would go well, before—before allowing your feelings to be irrevocably bound up in it. A blow, for you, might be hard to bear.'

'How could I help my feelings?' retorted Henry. 'I did not fix them purposely on Anna Lynn. Before I knew anything about it, they had fixed themselves. Almost before I knew that I cared for her, she was more to me than the sun in the heavens. There has been no help for it at all, I tell you So don't preach.'

'H ve you spoken to her?'

Henry shook his head. 'The time has not come. I must make it right with the master before I can stir a step; and I fear it is not quite ripe for that. Mind you don't talk.'

William smiled. 'I will mind '

'You'd better. If that Quaker society got a hint, there's no knowing what hullabaloo they'd make. They might be for reading Anna a public lecture at Meeting; or get Samuel Lynn to vow he'd not give his consent.'

'I should argue in this way, were I you, Henry With my love so firmly fixed on Anna Lynn—— I beg your pardon, Miss Ashley.'

William started up. Mary Ashley was standing close by the sofa. Had she caught the purport of the last words?

'Mamma spoke twice, but you were too busily engaged to hear' said Mary. 'Henry, James is waiting to wheel your sofa to the tea-table.'

Henry rose. Passing his arm through William's he approached the group The servant pushed the sofa after them. Standing together were Mary Ashley and Anna. They presented a great contrast. Mary wore an evening dress of glittering silk, its low body trimmed with rich white lace; white lace hanging from its drooping sleeves; and she had on ornaments of gold Anna was in grey merino, high in the neck, closed at the wrists; not a bit of lace about her, not an ornament; nothing but a plain collar of white linen. 'Catch me letting her wear those Methodistical things when she shall be mine!' thought Henry. 'I'll make a bonfire of the lot.'

But the Quaker cap? Ah! it was not there. Anna had continued her habit at home of throwing it off, as formerly. Patience reprimanded in vain. She was not seconded by Samuel Lynn. 'We are by ourselves, Patience; it does not much matter,' he would say; 'the child says she is cooler without it.' But had Samuel Lynn surmised that Anna was in the habit of discarding it on every possible occasion when she was from home, he had been as severe as Patience. At Mr. Ashley's, especially, she would sit, as now, without it, her lovely face made more lovely by the aid of its falling curls. Anna did wrong, and she knew that she did it; but she was a wilful girl, and a vain one. That pretty, timid, retiring manner concealed much self-will, much vanity; though in some things she was as easily swayed as a child.

She disobeyed Patience in another matter. Patience would say to her, 'Should Mary Ashley be opening her instrument of music thee will mind not to listen to her songs: thee can go into another room '

'Oh, yes, Patience,' she would answer; 'I will mind '

But, instead of not listening, Miss Anna would place herself close to the piano, and drink in the songs as if her whole heart were in the music. Music had a great effect upon her; and there she would sit entranced, as though she were in some bright Elysium. She said nothing of this at home; and the deceit was wrong.

They were sitting down to tea, when Herbert Dare came in. The hours for meals were early at Mr. Ashley's: the medical men deemed it best for Henry. Herbert could be a gentleman when he chose; good-looking a so; quite an addition to a drawing-room. He took his seat between Mary and Anna.

'I say, how is it you are not dining at home this evening?' asked Henry, who somehow did not regard the Dares with any great favour.

'I dined in the middle of the day,' was Herbert's reply.

'The condescension! I thought only plebeians did that. James, is there a piece of chalk in the house? I must chalk that up.'

'Henry! Henry!' reproved Mrs. Ashley.

'Oh let him talk, Mrs Ashley,' said Herbert, with supreme good humour. 'There's nothing he likes so well as a wordy war.'

'Nothing in the world,' acquiesced Henry. Especially with Herbert Dare.'

CHAPTER IV.

ATTERLY'S FIELD.

Laughing, talking, playing at proverbs, earning and paying forfeits, it was a merry group in

Mrs. Ashley's drawing-room. That lady herself was not joining in the merriment. She sat apart at a small table, some work in her hand, speaking a word now and then, and smiling to herself in echo to some unusual bursts of laughter. It was surprising that only five voices could make such a noise They were sitting in a circle; Mary Ashley between William Halliburton and Herbert Dare, Anna Lynn between Herbert Dare and Henry Ashley, Henry and William side by side.

Time, in these happy moments, passes rapidly. In due course, the hands of the French clock on the mantelpiece pointed to half-past eight, and its silver tones rung out the chimes. They were at the end of the game—Herbert Dare standing in a corner, sent there to pay the penalty of the last forfeit—and just settling themselves to commence another. The striking of the half-hour aroused William, and he glanced towards the clock.

'Half-past eight! who would have thought it? I had no idea it was so late I must leave you just for half an hour,' he added, rising.

'Leave for what?' cried Henry Ashley.

'To go as far as East's. I will not stop'

Henry broke into a 'wordy war,' as Herbert Dare had phrased it earlier in the evening. William smiled, and overruled him in his quiet way

'They hold my promise to go round this evening,' he said. 'I gave it them unconditionally I must just step there to tell them I cannot come —if that's not a contradiction. Don't look so cross, Henry.'

'Of course, you don't mean coming back,' resentfully spoke Henry. 'When you get there, there you'll stop.'

'No; I have told you I would not. But if I let them expect me all the evening, they will be looking and waiting, and do no good.'

He went out as he spoke, and quitted the house. At the front gate, as he reached it, Mr. Ashley was coming in. Mr. Ashley had been to the manufactory; he did not often go after tea. 'Going already, William?' Mr. Ashley exclaimed, in an accent of surprise.

'Not for long, sir. I must just look in at East's.'

'Is that scheme likely to prosper? Can you keep the men?'

'Yes, indeed, I think so. My hopes are strong'

'Well, there's nothing like hope,' answered Mr Ashley, with a laugh. 'But I shall wonder if you do keep them William,' he added, after a slight pause, his tone changing to a business one, 'I have a few words to say to you. I was about speaking to you in the counting-house this afternoon, but something put it aside. I have changed my plans with respect to this Lyons journey. Instead of despatching you, as I had thought of, I believe I shall send Samuel Lynn.'

Mr. Ashley paused. William did not immediately reply.

'Samuel Lynn's experience is greater than yours. It is a new thing, and he will see, better than you could do, what can and what cannot be done.'

'Very well, sir,' at length answered William.

'You speak as though you felt disappointed,' remarked Mr. Ashley.

William did feel disappointed. But his incentive to the feeling lay far deeper than Mr. Ashley supposed. 'I should like to have gone, sir, very much. But—of course my liking, or not liking, has nothing to do with it. Perhaps it is as well that I should not go,' he resumed, more in self-soliloquy, as if he were trying to reconcile himself to the disappointment by argument, than in observation to Mr. Ashley. 'I do not see how the men would have got along without me at East's.'

'Ay, that's a grave consideration,' replied Mr. Ashley, in a joking tone, as he turned to walk to his own door.

William stood still, nailed as it were to the spot, looking after his master. A most unwelcome idea had flashed over him; and in the impulse of the moment he followed Mr. Ashley, speaking it out. Even in the night's obscurity, his emotion was perceptible.

'Mr. Ashley, the suspicion cast on me, at the time that cheque was lost, has not been the cause —the cause of your declining to intrust me with this commission?'

Mr. Ashley looked at him with surprise. But that William's agitation was all too real, causing even his breath to be impeded, his words uneven, he would have laughed at him.

'William, I think you are turning silly. There was no suspicion cast on you.'

'You have never stirred in the matter, sir; you have never spoken to me to tell me you were satisfied that I was not inculpated,' was William's impulsive answer.

'Spoken to you! where was the need? Why, William, my whole life, my daily intercourse with you, is only so much proof that you have my full confidence. Should I admit you to my home, to the companionship of my children, if I had no better faith in you than that?'

'True,' said William, beginning to recover himself 'It was a thought that flashed over me, sir, when you said I was not to be sent on the journey. I should not like you to doubt me; I could scarcely live under it.'

'William, you reproached me with not having stirred in——'

'I beg your pardon, sir. I never thought of such a thing as reproach. I would not presum to do it.'

'I have not stirred in the matter,' resumed Mr. Ashley. 'A very disagreeable suspicion arises in my mind at times, as to how the cheque went: and I do not choose to stir in it. Have you any suspicion on the point?'

The question took William by surprise. He stammered in his answer; an unusual thing for him to do. 'N——o.'

'I ask if you have a suspicion?' quietly repeated Mr. Ashley, in a tone of meaning, as if he took William's answer for nothing, or had not heard it.

William spoke out then readily. 'A suspicion has crossed my mind, sir. But it is one I should not like to impart to you.'

'That's enough. I see. White voluntarily took the loss of the money on himself. He came to me to say so; therefore, I infer that it has in some private manner been refunded to him. Mr. Dare veered round and advised me not to investigate the affair, as I was no loser; Delves hinted the same; altogether, I can see through the thing pretty clearly, and I am content to leave it alone. Are you satisfied? If not——'

'Mr. Ashley broke off abruptly. William waited.

'So don't turn foolish again. You and I now understand each other. William!' he emphatically added, 'I am getting to like you almost as I do my own children. I am proud of you; and I shall be prouder yet. God bless you, my boy!'

It was so very rare that the calm, dignified Thomas Ashley was betrayed into anything like demonstrativeness, that William could only stand and look. And while he looked, the door closed on his master.

He went away with all his speed, calling in at his home. Were the truth to be told, perhaps William was quite as anxious to be back at Mr. Ashley's, as Henry was that he should be. Scarcely stopping to say a word of greeting, he opened a drawer, took from it a small case of fossils, and then searched for something else—something which apparently he could not find.

'Have any of you seen my microscope?' he asked, turning to the group at the table bending over their books.

Jane looked round. 'My dear, I lent it to Patience to-day. I suppose she forgot to bring it back. Gar, will you go and ask her for it?'

'Don't disturb yourself, Gar,' said William. 'I am going out. I'll ask Patience myself.'

Patience was alone in her parlour. She returned him the microscope, saying the reason she had not sent it in was, that she had not had time to use it. 'Thee art in evening dress!' she remarked to William.

'I am at Mrs. Ashley's. I have only come out for a few minutes. Thank you. Good night, Patience.'

'Wait thee a moment, William. Is Anna ready to come home?'

'No, that she is not. Why?'

'I want to send for her. Samuel Lynn is spending the evening in the town, so I must send Grace. And I don't care to send her late. She will only get talking to John Pembridge, if she goes out after he is home from work.'

William smiled. 'It is natural that she should, I suppose. When are they going to be married?'

'Shortly,' answered Patience, in a tone not quite so equable as usual. Patience saw no good in people getting married in general; and she was vexed at the prospect of losing Grace in particular. 'She leaves us in a fortnight from this,' she continued, alluding to Grace, 'and all her thoughts seem to be bent now upon meeting John Pembridge. Could thee bring Anna home for me?'

'With pleasure,' replied William.

'That is well, then. Grace does not deserve to go out to-night; for she wilfully crossed me to-day. Good-evening, William.'

The fossil case in his hand, and the microscope in his pocket, William made the best of his way to Honey Fair. Robert East, Stephen Crouch, Brumm, Thornycroft, Carter, Cross, and some half-dozen others, were crowded round Robert's table. William handed them the fossils and the microscope; told the men to amuse themselves with them for that night, and he would explain more about them on the morrow. He was ever anxious that the men should have some object of amusement as a chief point on these evenings; anything to keep their interest awakened.

Before the half hour had expired, he was back at Mr. Ashley's. The proverbs had been given up, and Mary was at the piano. Mr. Ashley had been accompanying her on his flute, on which instrument he was a brilliant player, and when William entered, she was singing a duet with Herbert Dare. Anna—disobedient Anna—was seated close, listening with all her ears and heart to the music, her up-turned countenance quite a sight to look upon, in its rapt pleasure.

'I think you could sing,' spoke Henry Ashley to her, in an under tone, after watching her while the song lasted.

Anna shook her head. 'I may not try,' she said, raising her blue eyes to him for one moment, and then dropping them.

'The time may come when you may,' returned Henry, in a deeper whisper.

She made no answer; she did not lift her eyes; but the faintest possible smile parted her rosy lips—a smile which seemed to express a self-consciousness that perhaps that time might come. And Henry, shy and sensitive, stood apart and gazed upon her, his heart beating.

'Young lady,' said William, advancing, 'do you know that a special honour has been assigned me to-night? One that concerns you'

Anna raised her eyes fully now. She felt as much at her ease with William as she did with her father or Patience. 'What dost thee say, William? An honour?

'That of seeing you safely home. I——'

'What's that for?' interrupted Anna. 'Where's my father?'

'He is not at home this evening. And Patience did not care to send out Grace. I'll take care of you.'

In spite of William's observation not being specially called forth, he could not but observe the sudden flush, the glow of pleasure, or what looked like pleasure, that overspread Anna's countenance at the information. 'What's that for?' he thought, borrowing her recent words. But Mary began to sing again, and his attention was diverted.

Ten o'clock was the signal for their departure. As they were going out—William, Anna, and Herbert Dare, who took the opportunity to leave with them—Henry Ashley limped after them, and drew William aside in the hall.

'Honour bright, mind, my friend!'

William did not understand. 'Honour bright, always,' said he. 'But what do you mean?'

'You'll not get making love to her as you go home!'

William could not help laughing. He turned his amused face full on Henry. 'Be at rest. I would not care to make love to her had I full leave and license from the Quaker society, granted me in public conclave.'

'Do you think I did not see her brightened countenance when you told her she was to go home with you?' retorted Henry.

'I saw it, too. I conclude she was pleased that her father was not coming for her, little undutiful thing! However it may have been, rely upon it the brightening was not for me.'

Pressing his hand warmly, with a pressure that no false friend ever gave, William hastened away. It was time. Herbert Dare and Anna had not waited for him, but were ever so far a-head.

'Very polite of you!' cried William, when he caught them up. 'Anna, had you gone pitching off that part of the path that they are mending, and broken your head in the road, I should have been responsible, you know. You might have waited for me.'

He spoke in good humour, making a joke of it. Herbert Dare did not appear to receive it as one. He retorted haughtily—

'Do you suppose I am not capable of taking care of Miss Lynn? As much so as you, at any rate.'

'Possibly,' coolly returned William, not losing his good-humoured tone. Herbert Dare had given Anna his arm. William walked near her on the other side. Thus they reached Mr. Lynn's.

'Good night,' said Herbert, shaking hands with her. 'Good night to you, Halliburton.'

'Good night,' replied William.

Herbert Dare set off running. William knocked at the door, and waited until it was opened. Then he likewise shook hands with Anna and saw her in.

Frank and Gar were putting up their books for the night, when William entered. The boarders had gone to bed. Jane, a very unusual thing for her, was sitting by the fire, doing nothing.

'Am I not idle, William?' she said.

William bent to kiss her. 'There's no need for you to be anything but idle now, mother.'

'No need! William, you know better. There's great need that none should be idle; none in all the world. But I have a bad headache to-night.'

'William,' called out Gar, 'they brought this round for you from East's. Young Tom came with it.'

It was the case of fossils and the microscope. William observed that they need not have sent them, as he should want them there on the next evening. 'Patience said she had not had time to use the microscope,' he continued. 'I think I will take it in to her. I suppose she has been buying linen, and wants to see if the threads are even.'

'The Lynns will be gone to bed at this time,' said Jane.

'Not to-night. I have but just seen Anna home from Mrs. Ashley's; and Mr. Lynn is gone out to supper.'

He turned to leave the room with the microscope, but Gar was looking at the fossils, and asked the loan of it. A few minutes, and William finally went out.

Patience came to the door, in answer to his knock. She thanked him for the microscope, and stood a minute or two chatting. Patience was fond of gossip; there was no denying it.

'Will thee not walk in?'

'Not now,' he said, turning away. 'Good night, Patience.'

'Good night to thee. Thee send in Anna, please. She is having a pretty long talk with thy mother.'

William was at a loss. 'I saw Anna in from Mr. Ashley's.'

'She did but ask whether her father was home, and then ran through the house,' replied Patience. 'She had a message for thy mother, she said, from Margaret Ashley.'

'Mrs. Ashley does not send messages to my mother,' returned William, in some wonder. 'They have no acquaintance with each other—beyond a bow, in passing.'

'She must have sent her one to-night—why else should the child go in to deliver it?' persisted Patience. 'Not but that Anna is always running into thy house at nights. I fear she must trouble thy mother at her class.'

She never stays long enough for that,' replied William. 'When she does come in—and it is not often—she just opens the door; 'How dost thee, friend Jane Halliburton?' and out again.'

'Then thee can know nothing about it, William. I tell thee she never stays less than an hour, and she is always there. I say to her that one of these evenings thy mother may likely be hinting to her that her room will be more acceptable than her company. Thee send her home now, please.'

William turned away. Curious thoughts were passing through his mind. That Anna did not go in, in the frequent way Patience intimated; that she rarely stayed above a minute or two, he knew. He knew—at least, he felt perfectly sure—that Anna was not at this house now; had not been at it. And yet Patience said 'Send her home.'

'Has Anna been here?' he asked, when he went in.

'Anna? No.'

Not just that moment, to draw observation, but presently, William quitted the room, and went into the garden at the back. A very unpleasant suspicion had arisen in his mind. It might not have occurred to him, but for certain glances which he had observed pass that evening between Herbert Dare and Anna—glances of confidence—as if they had a private mutual understanding on some point or other. He had not understood them then: he very much feared he was about to understand them now.

Opening the gate leading to the field at the back, commonly called Atterly's Field, he looked cautiously out. For a moment or two he could see nothing. The hedge was thick on either side, and no living being appeared to be underneath its shade. But he saw farther when his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity.

Pacing slowly in company, were Herbert Dare and Anna. Now moving on, a few steps; now stopping to converse more at ease. William drew a deep breath. He saw quite enough to be sure this was not the first time they had so paced together: and thought after thought crowded on his mind; one idea, one remembrance chasing another.

Was this the explanation of the plaid cloak, which had paraded stealthily on that very field-path during the past winter? There could not be a doubt of it. And was it in this manner that Anna's flying absences from home were spent—absences which she, in her unpardonable deceit, had accounted for to Patience by saying that she was with Mrs. Halliburton? Alas for Anna! Alas for all who deviate by an untruth from the straight path of rectitude! If the misguided child—she was little better than a child—could but have seen the future that was before her! It may have been very pleasant, very romantic to steal a march on Patience, and pace out there, all independent, in the cold, chattering to Herbert Dare; listening to his protestations that he cared for nobody in the world but herself; never had cared, never should care: but it was laying up for Anna a day of reckoning, the like of which had rarely fallen on a young head. William seemed to take it all in at a glance; and, rising tumultuously over other unpleasant thoughts, came the remembrance of Henry Ashley's misplaced and ill-starred love.

With another deep breath that was more like a groan—for Herbert Dare never brought good to anybody in his life, and William knew it—William set off towards them. Whether they heard the footsteps, or whether they deemed the time for parting had come, certain it was that Herbert was gone before William could reach them, and Anna was speeding towards her home with a light and fleet step. William placed himself in her way, and she started aside with a scream that went echoing through the field. Then they had not heard him.

'William, is it thee? Thee hast frightened me nearly out of my senses.'

'Anna,' he gravely said, 'Patience is waiting for you.'

Anna Lynn's imagination led her to all sorts of fantastic fears. 'Oh, William, thee hast not been in to Patience!' she exclaimed, in a fit of trembling. 'Thee hast not been to our house to seek me!'

They had reached his gate now. He halted, and took her hand in his, his manner impressive, his voice firm. 'Anna, I must speak to you as I would to my own sister; as I might to Janey, had she lived, and been drawn into this undesirable imprudence. Though, indeed, I should not then speak, but act. What tales are they that Herbert Dare is deceiving you with?'

'Hast thee been in to Patience? Hast thee been in to Patience?' reiterated Anna.

'Patience knows nothing of this. She thinks you are at our house. I ask you, Anna, what foolish tales Herbert Dare is deceiving you with?'

Anna—relieved on the score of her fright—shook her head petulantly. 'He is not deceiving me with any. He would not deceive.'

'Anna, hear me. His very nature, as I believe, is deceit. I fear he has little truth, little honour with him. Is Herbert professing to—to love you.'

'I will not answer thee aught. I will not hear thee speak against Herbert Dare.'

'Anna,' he continued, in a lower tone, 'you ought to be *afraid* of Herbert Dare. He is not a good man.'

How wilful she was! 'It is of no use thy talking,' she reiterated, putting her fingers to her ears. 'Herbert Dare is good. I will not hear thee speak against him.'

'Then Anna, as you meet it in this way, I must inform your father or Patience of what I have seen. If you will not keep yourself out of harm's way, they must do it for you.'

It terrified her beyond everything. Anna could have died rather than suffer her escapade to get to the ears of home. 'How can thee talk of harm, William? What harm is likely to come to me? I did no more harm talking to Herbert Dare here, than I did, talking to him in Margaret Ashley's drawing-room.'

'My dear child, you do not understand things,' he answered. 'The very fact of your stealing from your home to walk about in this manner, however innocent it may be in itself, would do you incalculable harm in the eyes of the world. And I am quite sure that in no shape can Herbert Dare bring you good, or conduce to your good. Tell me one thing, Anna: Have you learnt to care much for him?'

'I don't care for him at all,' responded Anna.

'No! Then why walk about with him?'

'Because it's fun to cheat Patience.'

'Oh, Anna, this is very wrong, very foolish. Do you mean what you say—that you do not care for him?'

'Of course I mean it,' she answered. 'I think he is very kind and pleasant, and he gave me a pretty locket. But that's all. William, thee will not tell upon me?' she continued, clinging to his arm, her tone changing to one of imploring entreaty, as the terror, which she had been endeavoring to hide with light words, returned upon her. 'William!' thee art kind and obliging—thee will not tell upon me! I will promise thee never to meet Herbert Dare again, if thee will not.'

'It would be for your own sake, Anna, that I should speak. How do I know that you would keep your word?'

'I give thee my promise that I will! I will not meet Herbert Dare in this way again. I tell thee I do not care to meet him. Can thee not believe me?'

He did believe her, implicitly. Her eyes were streaming down with tears; her pretty hands clung about him. He did like Anna very much, and he would not draw down vexation upon her, if it could be avoided with expediency.

'I will rely upon you, then, Anna. Believe me, you could not pick out a worse friend in all Helstonleigh, than Herbert Dare. I have your word?'

'Yes. And I have thine.'

He placed her arm within his own, and led her to the back door of her house. Patience was standing at it. 'I have brought you the little truant,' he said

'It is well thee hast,' replied Patience. 'I had just opened the door to come after her. Anna, thee art worse than a wild thing. Running off in this manner!'

It had not been in William's way to see much of Anna's inward qualities. He had not detected her deceit; he did not know that she could be untruthful when it suited her so to be. He had firm faith in her word, never questioning but it might be depended upon. Nevertheless, when he came afterwards to reflect upon the matter, he deemed it might be his duty to give Patience a little word of caution. And this he could do without compromising Anna.

He contrived to see Patience alone the very next day. She began talking of their previous evening at the Ashleys.

'Yes,' observed William, 'it was a pleasant evening. It would have been all the pleasanter, though, but for one who was there—Herbert Dare.'

'I do not admire the Dares,' said Patience, in a frigid tone.

'Nor I. But I observed one thing, Patience—that he admires Anna. Were Anna my sister, I should not like her to be too much admired by Herbert Dare. So take care of her.'

Patience looked steadily at him. William continued, his tone dropped to a confidential one:

'You know what Herbert Dare is said to be, Patience—fonder of leading people to ill than to good. Anna is giddy—as you yourself tell her twenty times in a day. I would keep her carefully under my own eye. I would not even allow her to run into our house at night, as she is fond of doing,' he added, with marked emphasis. 'She is as safe there as she is here; but it is giving her a taste of liberty that she may not be the better for in the end. When she comes in, send Grace with her, or bring her yourself: I will see her home again. Tell her she is a grown-up young lady now, and it is not proper that she should go out unattended,' he concluded, laughing.

'William, I do not quite understand thee. Hast thee cause to say this?'

'All I say, Patience, is—keep her out of the way of possible harm, of undesirable friendships. Were Anna to be drawn into a liking for Herbert Dare, I am sure it would not be agreeable to Mr. Lynn. He would never consider the Dares a desirable family for her to marry into.——'

'Marry into the family of the Dares!' interrupted Patience, hotly. 'Are thee losing thy senses, William?'

'These likings sometimes lead to marriage,' quietly continued William. 'Therefore, I say, keep her away from all chance of forming such. Believe me, my advice is good.'

'I think I understand,' concluded Patience. 'I thank thee kindly, William.'

CHAPTER V.

LOOKING INTO THE SHOP WINDOWS.

A very unpleasant part of the story has now to be touched upon. Unpleasant things occur in real life, and if true pictures have to be given of the world as it exists, as it goes on its round, day by day, the mention of them cannot be wholly avoided.

Certain words of William Halliburton to Patience had run in this fashion: 'Were Anna to be drawn into a liking for Herbert Dare, I am sure it would not be agreeable to Mr. Lynn. He would never consider the Dares a desirable family for her to marry into.' In thus speaking, William had striven to put the case in a polite sort of form for the ears of Patience. As to any probability of marriage between one of the Dares and Anna Lynn, he would scarcely have believed it within the range of possibility. The Dares, one and all, would have considered Anna far beneath them in position, while the difference of religion would on Anna's side be a bar. The worst that William had contemplated was the 'liking' he had hinted at. He cared for Anna's welfare and comfort as he would have cared for a sister's, and he believed it would not contribute to her comfort that she should become attached to Herbert Dare. But for compromising Anna—and he had given his word not to do it—he would have spoken out fully, that there was a danger of this liking supervening, if she met him as he feared she had been in the habit of doing. Certainly he would not have alluded to the remote possibility of marriage, the mention of which had so scared Patience.

What had William thought, what had Patience said, could they have known that this liking was already implanted in Anna's heart beyond recal! Alas! that it should have been so! Quiet, childish, timid as Anna outwardly appeared, the strongest affection had been aroused in her heart for Herbert Dare—was filling it to its every crevice. These apparently shy, sensitive natures, are sometimes only the more passionate and wayward within. One evening, a few months previously, Anna was walking in Atterly's Field, behind their house. Anna had been in the habit of walking there—nay, of playing there—since she was a child, and she would as soon have associated harm with their garden as with that field. Farmer Atterly kept his sheep in it, and Anna had run about as long as she could remember with the little lambs. Herbert Dare came up accidentally—the path through it, leading along at the back of the houses, was public, though not much frequented—and he spoke to Anna. Anna knew him to say 'Good-day' when she passed him in the street; and she now and then saw him at Mrs. Ashley's. Herbert stayed talking with her a few minutes, and then went on his way. Somehow, from that time, he and Anna encountered each other there pretty frequently; and that was how the liking grew. If a qualm of conscience crossed Miss Anna at times that it was not quite the thing for a young lady to do, thus to meet a gentleman in secret, she conveniently sent the qualm away. That harm should arise from it in any way never so much as crossed her mind for a moment; and to do Herbert Dare justice, real harm was probably as far from his mind as from hers. He grew to like her, almost as she liked him. Herbert Dare did not, in the sight of Helstonleigh, stand out a model of all the cardinal virtues; but he was not all bad. Anna believed him all good—all honour, truth, excellence; and her heart had flashed out a rebuke to William when he hinted that Herbert might not be a paragon. She only knew that the very sound of his footstep made her heart leap with happiness; she only knew that to her he appeared everything that was bright and fascinating. Her great dread was, lest their intimacy should become known, and separation ensue. That separation would be inevitable, were her father or Patience to become cognizant of it, Anna rightly believed.

Cunning little sophist that she was! She would fain persuade herself that an innocent meeting out-of-doors was justifiable, where a meeting indoors was not practicable. They had no acquaintance with the Dares; consequently, Herbert could plead no excuse for calling in upon them—none at least that would be likely to stand patent with Patience. And so the young lady reconciled her conscience in the best way she

could, stole out as often as she was able to meet him, and left discovery to take care of itself.

Discovery came in the shape of William Halliburton. It was bad enough; but far less alarming to Anna than it might have been. Had her father dropped upon her, she would have run away and fallen into the nearest ditch, in her terror and consternation.

Though guilty of certain trifling inaccuracies—such as protesting she 'did not care' for Herbert Dare—Anna, in that interview with William, fully meant to keep the promise she made, not to meet him. Promises, however, given under the influence of terror or other sudden emotion, are not always kept. It would probably prove so with Anna's. One thing was indisputable—that where a mind could so far forget its moral rectitude as to practice deceit in one particular, as Anna was doing, it would not be over-scrupulous to keep its better promises.

Anna's thoughts for many a morning latterly, when she arose, had been, 'This evening I shall see him;' and the prospect seemed to quicken her fingers, as it quickened her heart. But on the morning after the discovery, her first thought was, 'I must never see him again as I have done. How shall I warn him not to come?' That he would be in the field again that evening, unless warned, she knew: if William Halliburton saw him there, a quarrel might ensue between them; at any rate, an unpleasant scene. Anna descended, feeling cross and petulant, and inclined to wish William had been at the bottom of the sea before he had found out what he did find out the previous evening.

'Where there's a will, there's a way,' it is said. Anna Lynn contrived that day to exemplify it. Her will was set upon seeing Herbert Dare, and she did see him: it can scarcely be said by accident. Anna contrived to be sent into the town by Patience on an errand, and she contrived to linger so long in the neighbourhood of Mr. Dare's office, gazing in at the shops in West Street (if Patience had but seen her!) that Herbert Dare passed.

'Anna!'

'Herbert, I have been waiting in the hope of seeing thee,' she whispered, her manner timid as a fawn, her pretty cheeks blushing. 'Thee must not come again in the evening, for I cannot meet thee!'

'Why so?' asked Herbert.

'William Halliburton saw me with thee last night, and he says it is not right. I had to give him my promise not to meet thee again, or else he would have told my father.'

Herbert cast a word to William; not a complimentary one. 'What business is it of his?' he asked.

'I dare not stay talking to thee, Herbert. Patience, she'll be likely sending Grace after me, finding me so long away. But I was obliged to tell thee this, lest thee should be coming again. Fare thee well!'

Passing swiftly from him, Anna went on her way. Herbert did not choose to follow her in the public street. She went along, poor child, with her head down and her eyelashes glistening. It was little else than bitter sorrow thus to part with Herbert Dare.

Patience was standing at the door looking out for her when she came in sight of home. Patience had given little heed to what William Halliburton said the previous night, or she might not have sent Anna into Helstonleigh alone. In point of fact, Patience had thought William a little overfanciful. But when, instead of being home at four o'clock, as she ought to have been, the clock struck five, and she had not made her appearance, Patience began to think she did let her have her liberty too much.

'Now, where has thee been?' was the salutation of Patience, delivered in a tone of acrimony.

'I met so many people, Patience. They stayed to talk with me.'

Brushing past Patience, conveniently deaf to her subsequent reproofs, Anna flew up to her room. When she came down her father had entered, and Patience was pouring out the tea.

'Will thee tell thy father where thee has been?'

The command was delivered in Patience's driest tone. Anna, inwardly tormented, outwardly vexed, burst into tears. The Quaker looked up in surprise.

Patience explained. Anna had left home at three o'clock to execute a little commission: she might well have been home in three-quarters of an hour, and she had only made her appearance now.

'What kept thee, child?' asked her father.

'I only looked in at a shop or two,' pleaded Anna, through her tears. 'There were the prettiest new engravings in at Thomas Woakam's! If Patience had wanted me to run both ways, she should have said so.'

Notwithstanding the little spice of impertinence peeping out in the last sentence, Samuel Lynn saw no reason to correct Anna. That she could be ever wrong, he scarcely admitted to his own heart. 'Dry thy tears, child, and take thy tea,' said he. 'Patience wanted thee, maybe, for some household matter; it can wait to another opportunity. Patience,' he added, as if to drown the sound of his words and their remembrance, 'are my shirts in order?'

'Thy shirts in order?' repeated Patience. 'Why does thee ask that?'

'I should not have asked it without reason,' returned he. 'Will thee please give me an answer?'

'The old shirts are as much in order as things beginning to wear can be,' replied Patience. 'Thy new shirts I cannot say much about. They will not be finished on this side Midsummer, unless Anna sits to them a little closer than she is doing now.'

'Thy shirts will be ready quite in time, father; before the old ones are gone beyond wearing,' spoke up Anna.

'I don't know that,' said Mr. Lynn. 'Had they been ready, child, I might have wanted them now. I am going a journey.'

'Is it the French journey thee has talked of once or twice lately?' interposed Patience.

'Yes,' said Samuel Lynn. 'The master was speaking to me about it this afternoon. We were interrupted, and I did not altogether gather when he wishes me to start; but I fancy it will be immediately —'

'Oh, father, could thee not take me?'

The interruption came from Anna. Her blue eyes were glistening, her cheeks were crimson; a journey in the interior of France wore charms for her as great as it did for Cyril Dare. All the way home from West Street, she had been thinking how she should spend her miserable home days, debarred of the evening snatches of Mr. Herbert's charming society. Going to France would be something.

'I wish I could take thee, child! But thee art aware thee might as well ask me to take the Malvern Hills.'

In her inward conviction, Anna believed she might. Before she could oppose any unswering, but most inutile argument, Samuel Lynn's attention was directed to the road. Parting opposite to his house, as if they had just walked together from the manufactory, were Mr. Ashley and William Halliburton. The master walked on. William, catching Samuel Lynn's eye, came across and entered.

Mr. Ashley had been telling William some news. Though no vacillating man in a general way, it appeared that he had again reconsidered his determination with regard to despatching William to France. He had come to the resolve to send him, as well as Samuel Lynn. William could not help surmising that his betrayed emotion the previous night, his fears touching Mr. Ashley's reason for not sending him, may have had something to do with that gentleman's change of mind.

'Will you be troubled with me?' asked he of Mr. Lynn, when he had imparted this.

'If such be the master's fiat, I cannot help being troubled with thee,' was the answer of Samuel Lynn; but the tone of his voice spoke of anything rather than dissatisfaction. 'Why is he sending thee as well as myself?'

'He told me he thought it might be best that you should show me the markets, and introduce me to the skin merchants, as I should probably have to make the journey alone in future,' replied William. 'I had no idea, until the master mentioned it now, that you had ever made the journey yourself, Mr. Lynn; you never told me.'

'There was nothing that I am aware of, to call for the information,' observed the Quaker, in his usual dry manner. 'I went there two or three times on my own account when I was in business for myself. Did the master tell thee when he should expect us to start?'

'Not precisely. The beginning of the week, I think.'

'I have been asking my father if he cannot take me,' put in Anna, in a plaintive tone, looking at William.

'And I have answered her, that she may as well ask me to take the Malvern Hills,' was the rejoinder of Samuel Lynn. 'I could as likely take the one as the other.'

Likely or unlikely, Samuel Lynn would have taken her beyond all doubt—taken her with a greedy, sheltering grasp—had he foreseen the result of his leaving her, the grievous trouble that was to fall upon her head.

'Thee will drink a dish of tea with us this evening, William?'

It was Patience who spoke. William hesitated, but he saw they would be pleased at his doing so, and he sat down. The conversation turned upon France—upon Samuel Lynn's experience of it, and William's anticipations. Anna lapsed into silence and abstraction.

In the bustle of moving, when Samuel Lynn was departing for the manufactory, William, before going home to his books, contrived to obtain a word alone with Anna.

'Have you thought of our compact?'

'Yes,' she said, freely meeting his eyes, in honest truth. 'I saw him this afternoon in the street; I went on purpose to try and meet him. He will not come again.'

'That is well. Mind and take care of yourself, Anna,' he added, with a smile. 'I shall be away, and not able to give an eye to you, as I freely confess it had been my resolve to do.'

Anna shook her head. 'He does not come again,' she repeated. 'Thee may go away believing me, William.'

And William did go away believing her—went away to France believing her; believing that the undesirable intimacy was at an end.

CHAPTER VI.

PATIENCE COME TO GRIEF.

In the early part of March, Samuel Lynn and William departed on the French journey. And the first thought that occurred to Patience afterwards was one that is apt to occur to many thrifty housekeepers on the absence of the master—that of instituting a thorough cleansing of the house, from the garret to the cellar; or, as Anna mischievously expressed it, 'turning the house inside out.' She knew Patience did not like her wild phrases, and therefore she used them.

Patience was parting with Grace—the servant who had been with them so many years. Grace had resolved to get married. In vain Patience assured her that marriage, collectively speaking, was found to be nothing better than a bed of thorns. Grace would not listen. Other people had risked the thorns before her, and she thought she must try her chance with the rest. Patience had no resource but to fall in with the decision, and to look out for another servant. It appeared that she could not find one readily; at least, one whom she would venture to try. She was over-particular; and while she waited and looked out, she engaged Hester Dell, a humble member of her own persuasion, to come in temporarily. Hester lived with her aged mother, not far off, chiefly supporting herself by doing fine needle-work at her own, or at the Friends' houses. She readily consented to take up her abode with Patience for a month or so, to help with the house-work, and looked upon it as a sort of holiday.

'It's of no use to begin the house until Grace shall be gone,' observed Patience to Anna 'She'd likely be scrubbing the paper on the walls, instead of the paint, for her head is turned just now.'

'What fun if she should!' ejaculated Anna.

'Fun for thee, perhaps, who art ignorant of cost and labour,' rebuked Patience. 'I shall wait until Grace has departed. The day that she goes Hester comes in; and I shall have the house begun the day following.'

'Couldn't thee have it begun the same day!' saucily asked Anna.

'Will thee attend to thy stitching?' returned Patience, sharply. 'Thy father's wristbands will not be done the better for thy nonsense.'

'Shall I be turned out of my bedroom?' resumed Anna.

'For a night, perchance. Thee can go into thy father's. But the top of the house will be done first.'

'Is the roof to be scrubbed?' went on Anna. 'I don't know how Hester will hold on while she does it.'

'Thee art in one of thy wilful humours this morning,' responded Patience. 'Art thee going to set me at defiance now thy father's back is turned?'

'Who said anything about setting thee at defiance?' asked Anna. 'I *should* like to see Hester at the roof!'

'Thee had better behave thyself, Anna,' was the retort of Patience.' And Anna, in her joyous wilfulness, burst into a merry laugh.'

Grace departed, and Hester came in: a quiet little body, of forty years, with dark hair and decayed teeth. Patience, as good as her word, was up betimes the following morning; and had the house up betimes, to institute the ceremony. Their house contained the same accommodation inside as did Mrs. Halliburton's, with this addition—that the open garret in the Quaker's had been partitioned off into two chambers. Patience slept in one: Grace had occupied the other. The three bedrooms on the floor underneath were used, one by Mr. Lynn, one by Anna; the other was kept as a spare room, for any chance visitor; the 'best room' it was usually called. The house belonged to Mr. Lynn. Formerly, both houses had belonged to him; but at the time of his loss he had sold the other to Mr. Ashley.

The ablutions were in full play. Hester, with a pail, and mop, and scrubbing-brush, and other essential requisites, was ensconced in the top chambers; Anna, ostensibly at her wristband stitching (but the work did not get on too fast), was singing to herself, in an undertone, in one of the parlours, the door safely shut; while Patience was exercising a general superintendence, giving an eye everywhere. Suddenly there echoed a loud noise, as of a fall, and a scream resounded throughout the house. It appeared to come from what they usually called the bed-room floor. Anna flew up the first stairs, and Hester Dell flew down the upper ones. At the foot of the garret stairs, her head close against the door of Anna's chamber, lay Patience and a heavy bed-pole. In attempting to carry the pole down from her room, she had somehow got it entangled with her legs, and had fallen heavily.

'Is the house coming down?' Anna was beginning to say. But she stopped in consternation when she saw Patience. Hester attempted to pick her up.

'Thee cannot raise me, Hester. Anna, child, thee must not attempt to touch me. I fear my leg is br——'

Her voice died away, her eyes closed, and a livid hue, as of death, overspread her countenance. Anna, more terrified than she had ever been in her life, flew round to Mrs. Halliburtons.

Dobbs, from her kitchen, saw her coming—saw

the young face streaming down with tears, heard the short cries of alarm—and Dobbs stepped out.

'Why, what on earth's the matter now?' asked she.

Anna laid hold of Dobbs, and clung to her; partly that, to do so, seemed some protection in her great terror. 'Oh, Dobbs, come in to Patience!' she cried. 'I think she's dying.'

The voice, rising to a shriek in its uncontrolled emotion, reached the ears of Jane. She came forth from the parlour. Dobbs was then running in to Samuel Lynn's, and Jane ran also, comprehending nothing.

Patience was reviving when they got in. All her cry was, that they must not move her. One of her legs was in some manner doubled under her, and doubled over the pole. Jane felt a certain conviction that it was broken.

'Who can run the fastest?' she asked. 'We must get Mr. Parry here.

Hester waited for no further instructions. She caught up her fawn-coloured shawl and her grey bonnet, and was off, putting them on as she ran. Anna, sobbing wildly, turned and hid her face on Jane, like one who wants to be comforted. Then, her mood changing, she threw herself down beside Patience, the tears from her own eyes falling on Patience's face.

'Patience, dear Patience, can thee forgive me? I have been wilful and naughty, but I never meant to cross thee really. I did it only to tease thee: I loved thee all the while.'

Patience, suffering as she was, drew down the repentant face to kiss it fervently. 'I know it, dear child; I know thee. Don't thee distress thyself for me.'

Mr. Parry came, and Patience was lifted up and carried into the spare room. Her leg was broken, and badly broken; the surgeon called it a compound fracture.

So there was an end to the grand scheme of cleansing for a long while to come! Patience lay in sickness and pain, and Hester had to make her the first care. Anna's spirits revived in a day or two. Mr. Parry said a cure would be effected in time; that the worst of the business was the long confinement for Patience; and Anna forgot her dutiful fit of repentance. Patience *would* be well again, would be about as before; and, as to the present confinement, Anna rather grew to look upon it as the interposition of some good fairy spirit, who must have taken her own liberty under its special protection.

Whether Anna would have succeeded in eluding the vigilance of Patience *up* cannot be told; she certainly did that of Patience *down*. Anna had told Herbert Dare that he was not to pay a visit to Atterly's field again, or expect her to pay one; but Herbert Dare was about the last person to obey such advice. Had William Halliburton remained to be—as Herbert termed it—a treacherous spy, there's no question but Herbert would have striven to set his vigilance at defiance; with the absence of William, the field, both literally and figuratively, was open to him. In the absence of Samuel Lynn, it was doubly open. Herbert Dare knew perfectly well that if the Quaker once got the slightest inkling of his private acquaintance with Anna, it would be effectually put a stop to. The wearing a cloak resembling William Halliburton's, on his visits to the field, had been the result of a bright idea. It had suddenly occurred to Mr. Herbert, that if the Quaker's lynx eyes did by mischance catch sight of the cloak, promenading some fine night at the back of his residence, they would accord it no particular notice, concluding the wearer to be William Halliburton taking moonlight exercise at the back of *his* residence. Nevertheless, Herbert had timed his visits so as to make pretty sure that Samuel Lynn was beyond view, safely ensconced in Mr. Ashley's manufactory; and he had generally succeeded. Not quite always, as the reader knows.

Anna was of a most persuadable nature. In defiance of her promise to William, she suffered Herbert Dare to persuade her again into the old system of meeting him. Guileless as a child, never giving thought to wrong or to harm—beyond the wrong and harm of thus clandestinely stealing out, and that wrong she conveniently ignored—she saw nothing very grave in the doing. Herbert could not come in-doors, Patience would be sure not to welcome him; and therefore, he logically argued to her own mind, she must go out to him. She had learnt to like Herbert Dare a great deal too well not to wish to meet him, to talk with him. Herbert, on his part, had learnt to like her. An hour passed in whispering to Anna, in mischievously untying her sober cap, and letting the curls fall, in laying his own hand fondly on the young head, and telling her he cared for her beyond every earthly thing, had grown to be one of his most favourite recreations; and Herbert was not one to deny himself any recreation that he took a fancy to. He intended no harm to the pretty child; it is possible that, had any one seriously pointed out to him the harm that might arise to Anna, in the estimation of Helstonleigh, should these stolen meetings be found out, Herbert might for once have done violence to his inclinations, and not persisted in them. Unfortunately—very unfortunately, as it was to turn out—there were none to give this word of caution. Patience was ill, William was away; and nobody else knew anything about it. In point of fact, Patience could

not be said to know anything, for the warning of William had not made the impression upon her that it ought to have done. Patience's confiding nature was in fault: for Anna deliberately to meet Herbert Dare or any other 'Herbert' in secret, she would have deemed a simple impossibility. In the judgment of Patience, it had been nothing less than irredeemable sin.

What did Herbert Dare promise to himself, in thus leading Anna into this imprudence? Herbert promised himself nothing—beyond the passing gratification of the hour. Herbert had never been one to give any care to the future; for himself, or for anybody else, and he was not likely to begin to do it yet awhile. As to seeking Anna for his wife, such a thought had never crossed his mind. In the first place, at the rate the Dares—Herbert and his brothers—were going on, a wife for any of them seemed amongst the impossibilities. Unless, indeed, she made the bargain beforehand, to live upon air; there was no chance of their having anything else to keep her upon. But, had Herbert been in a position, pecuniarily considered, to marry ten wives, Anna Lynn would not have been one of them. Agreeable as it might be to him to linger with Anna, he considered her far beneath himself; and pride, with Herbert, was always in the ascendant. Herbert had been introduced to Anna Lynn at Mrs. Ashley's, and that threw a sort of prestige round her; she was also enshrined in the respectable Quaker body of the town; but for these facts for being who she was, Herbert might have been less scrupulous in his mode of behaviour to her. He would not—it may be as well to say he dared not—be otherwise than considerate towards Anna Lynn; but, on the other hand, he would not have deemed her worthy to become his wife. On the part of Samuel Lynn, he would far rather have seen his child in her coffin, than the wife of Herbert Dare. The young Dares did not bear a good name in Helstonleigh.

In this most uncertain and unsatisfactory state of things, what on earth—as Dobbs had said to Anna—did Herbert want with her at all? Far, far better that he had allowed Anna to fall in with the sensible advice of William Halliburton—'Do not meet him more.' It was a sad pity; and it is very probable that Herbert Dare regretted it afterwards, in the grievous misery it entailed. Misery to both of them; and without positive ill conduct on the part of either.

But that time had not come yet, and we are only at the stage of Samuel Lynn's absence and Patience's broken leg. Anna had taken to steal out again; and her wits were at work to concoct a plausible plea for her absences to Hester Dell that no undesirable tales might be carried to Patience.

'Hester, Patience is a fidget. Thee must see that. She'd like me to keep at my work all day, all day, evening too, and never have a breath of fresh air! She'd like me to shut myself up in this parlour, as she has now to be shut up in her room; never to be in the garden in the lovely twilight; never to run and look at the pretty lambs in the field; never to go next door and say "How dost thee?" to Jane Halliburton! It's a shame, Hester!'

'Well, I think it would be, if it were true,' responded Hester, a simple woman in mind and speech, who loved Anna nearly as well as Patience did. 'But does thee not think thee are mistaken, child? Patience seems anxious that thee should go out. She says I am to take thee.'

'I dare say!' responded Anna; 'and leave her all alone! How would she come down stairs with her broken leg, if anybody knocked at the door? She's a dreadful fidget, Hester. She'd like to watch me as a cat watches a mouse. Look at last night! It's all on account of these shirts. She thinks I shan't get them done. I shall!'

'Why, dear, I think thee will,' returned Hester, casting her eyes on the work. 'Thee are getting on with them.'

'I am getting on nicely. I have done all the stitching, and nearly the plain part of the bodies; I shall soon be at the gathers. What did she say to thee last night?'

'She said, "Go to the parlour, Hester, and see whether Anna does not want a light." And I came and could not find thee. And then she said thee wast always running into the next door, troubling them, and she would not have it done. Thee came in just at the time, and she scolded thee.'

'Yes, she did,' resentfully spoke Anna. 'I tell thee, Hester, she's the worst fidget breathing. I give thee my word, Hester, that I had not been inside the Halliburtons' door. I had been in this garden and in the field. I had been close at work all day——'

'Not quite all day, dear,' interrupted Hester, willing to soothe the appearance of matters to the child as far as she was able. 'Thee had thy friend Mary Ashley here to call in the morning, and thee had Sarah Dixon in the afternoon.'

'Well, I had been at work a good part of the day,' corrected Anna, 'and I wanted some fresh air after it. Where's the crime?'

'Crime, dear! It's only natural. If I had not my errands to go upon, and so got the air that way, I'd like myself to run in the field, when my work was done.'

'So would anybody else, except Patience,' retorted Anna. 'Hester, look thee. When she asks after me again, thee hast no need to tell her,

should I have run out. It only fidgets her, and she is not well enough to be fidgeted. Thee tell her I am at my sewing. But I *can't* be sewing for ever, Hester; I must have a few minutes' holiday from it now and then. Patience might have cause to grumble if I ran away and left it in the day.'

'Well, dear, I think it is only reasonable,' slowly answered Hester, considering the matter over. 'I'll not tell her thee art in the garden again; for she must be kept tranquil, friend Parry says.'

'She was just as bad when I was a little girl, Hester,' concluded Anna. 'She'd not let me run in the garden alone then, for fear I should eat the gooseberries. But it is not gooseberry season now.'

'All true and reasonable,' thought Hester Dell.

And so the young lady contrived to enjoy a fair share of evening liberty. Not but that she could have done with more, had she known how to get it. And as the weeks went on, and the cold weather of the early spring merged into summer days, into more genial nights, she and Herbert Dare grew bold in their immunity from discovery, and scarcely an evening passed but they might have been seen, had anybody been on the watch, in the field of Farmer Atterly. Anna had got the length of taking his arm now; and there they would pace under cover of the hedge, Herbert talking, and Anna dreaming that she was in Eden.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOVERNESS'S EXPEDITION.

Herbert Dare sat enjoying the beauty of the April evening in the garden of Pomeranian Knoll. He was hoisted on the high back of a garden bench, and balanced himself astride on it, the tip of one toe resting on the seat, the other foot dangling. The month was drawing to its close, and the golden beams of the warm setting sun streamed right athwart Herbert's face. It might be supposed that he had seated himself there to bask in the soft, still air, in the lovely sunset: in point of fact, he hardly knew whether the sun was rising or setting—whether the evening was fair or foul—so buried was he in deep thought, in perplexing care.

The particular care which was troubling Herbert Dare, was one which has, at some time or other, troubled the peace of a great many of us. It was pecuniary embarrassment. Herbert had been in it a long while, had been sinking into it, in fact, deeper and deeper. He had managed to stave it off hitherto in some way or other; but the time to do that much longer was going by. He was not given to forethought, it has been previously mentioned; but he could not conceal from himself that unpleasantness would ensue, and that speedily, unless something could be done. What was that something to be? He did not know; he could not imagine. His father protested that he had not the means to help him; and Herbert believed that Mr. Dare told the truth. Not that Mr. Dare knew of the embarrassment to its extent. If he had, it would have come to the same, so far as his help went. His sons, as he said, had drained him.

Anthony passed the end of the walk. Whether he saw Herbert or not, certain it was, that he turned away from his direction. Herbert lifted his eyes, an angry light shining in them. He lifted his voice also, angry, too.

'Here, you! Don't go skulking off because you see me sitting here. I want you.'

Anthony was taken to. It is more than probable that he *was* skulking off, and that he *had* seen Herbert, for he did not particularly care then to come in contact with his brother. Anthony was in embarrassment on his own score; was ill at ease from more causes than one; and when the mind is troubled, sharp words do not tend to soothe it. Little else than sharp words had been exchanged latterly between Anthony and Herbert Dare.

It was no temporary ill-feeling, cross to-day, pleased to-morrow, which had grown up between them; the ill-will had existed a long while. Herbert believed that his brother had injured him, had wilfully played him false, and his heart bitterly resented it. That Anthony was in fault at the beginning, there was no doubt. He had drawn Herbert unsuspiciously—unsuspiciously on Herbert's part, you understand—into some mess with regard to bills. Anthony was fond of 'bills;' Herbert, more wise in that respect, had never meddled with them: his opinion coincided with his father's—that they were edged tools, which cut both ways. 'Eschew bills if you want to die upon your own bed,' was a saying of Mr. Dare's, frequently spoken for the benefit of his sons. Good advice, no doubt. Mr. Dare, as a lawyer, ought to know. Herbert had held by the advice; Anthony never had; and the time came when Anthony took care that his brother should not.

In a period of deep embarrassment for Anthony, he had persuaded Herbert to sign two bills for him, their aggregate amount being large; assuring him, in the most earnest and apparently truthful manner, that the money to meet them,

when due, was already provided. Herbert, in his good nature, fell into the snare. It turned out not only that the bills were not met at all, but Anthony had so contrived it that Herbert should be responsible, not he. Herbert regarded it as a shameful piece of treachery, and he never ceased reproaching his brother. Anthony, who was of a sullen, morose temper by nature, resented the reproach; and they did not lead together the most comfortable of lives. The bills were not settled yet; indeed, they formed part of Herbert's most pressing embarrassments. This was one cause of the ill-feeling between them, and there were others, of a different nature. Anthony and Herbert Dare had never been cordial with each other, even in childhood.

Anthony, called to, advanced. 'Who wants to skulk away?' asked he. 'Are you judging me by yourself?'

'I hope not,' returned Herbert, in a tone of the most withering contempt and scorn. 'Listen to me. I've told you five hundred times that I'll have some settlement, and if you don't come to it amicably, I'll force you to come to it. Do you hear, you? I'll *force* you to it.'

'Try it,' retorted Anthony, with a mocking laugh; and he coolly walked away.

Walked away, leaving Herbert in a towering rage. He felt inclined to follow him; to knock him down. Had Anthony only met the affair in a proper spirit, it had been different. Had he said; 'Herbert, I am uncommonly vexed—I'll see what can be done,' or words to that effect, half the sting on his brother's mind would have been removed; but, to taunt Herbert with having to pay—as he sometimes did—was nearly unbearable. Had Herbert been of Anthony's temper, he would have proved that it was unbearable.

But Herbert's temper was roused now. It was the toss of a die whether he followed Anthony and struck him, or whether he did not. The die was cast by the appearance of the Signora Varsini; and Anthony, for that evening, escaped.

It was not very gallant of Herbert to remain where he was, in the presence of the governess, astride upon the garden bench. Herbert was feeling angry in no common degree, and this may have been his excuse. She came up, apparently in anger also. Her brow was frowning, her compressed mouth was drawn in to that extent that its lips were hidden.

Not that the governess could be supposed to occupy any position in the mind or heart of Herbert Dare, except *as* governess; governess to his sisters. Herbert would probably have said so, had you asked him. What *she* might have said, is a different matter. She looks angry enough to say anything just now. The fact appeared to be—so far as anybody not personally interested in the matter could be supposed to gather it—that Herbert had given offence to the governess latterly, by not going to the school-room for what he called his Italian lessons. Of course he could not be in two places at once; and if his leisure hour after dinner was spent in Atterly's field, or in going to Atterly's field, it was impossible that he could be in the school-room, learning Italian of the Italian governess.

She came down upon him full sail. The moment Herbert saw her, he remembered having given her a half promise the previous day to pay her a visit that evening. 'Now for it!' thought he to himself.

'Why you keep me waiting like this?' began she, when she was close to him.

'Have I kept you waiting?' civilly returned Herbert. 'I am very sorry. The fact is, mademoiselle, I have a good deal of worry upon me, and I'm fit for nobody's company but my own to-night. You might not have thanked me for my visit, had I come.'

'That is my own look-out,' replied the governess. 'When a gentleman makes a promise to me, I expect him to keep it. I go up to the school-room, and I wait, I wait, I wait! Ah, my poor patience, how I wait! I have got that copy of Tasso, that you said you would like to see. Will you come?'

Herbert thought he was in for it. He glanced at the setting sun—at least, at the spot where the setting sun had been, for it had sunk below the horizon, leaving only some crimson streaks in the grey sky, to tell of what had been. Twilight was rapidly coming on, when he would depart to pay his usual evening visit: there was no time, he decided, for Tasso and the governess.

'I'll come another evening,' said he. 'I have an engagement, and I must go out to keep it.'

A stony hardness settled on the young lady's face. 'What engagement?' she imperatively demanded.

It might be thought that Herbert would have been justified in civilly declining to satisfy her curiosity. What was it to her? Apparently he deemed otherwise. Possibly he was afraid of an outbreak.

'What engagement! Oh—I am going to play a pool at billiards with Lord Hawkesley. He is in Helstonleigh again.'

'And that is what you go for, every evening—to play billiards with Lord Hawkesley?' she resumed, her eyes glistening ominously.

'Of course it is, mademoiselle. With Hawkesley or other fellows.'

'A lie!' curtly responded mademoiselle.

'I say,' cried Herbert, laughing good-humouredly, 'do you call that orthodox language?'

'It nothing to you what I call it,' she cried, clipping her words in her vehemence, as she was apt to do when excited. 'It's not with Milord Hawkesley, it's not to billiards that you go! I know it is not.'

'Then I tell you that I often play at billiards,' cried Herbert. 'On my honour!'

'May-be, may-be,' answered she, very rapidly. 'But it not to billiards that you go every evening. Every evening!—every evening! Not an evening now, but you go out, you go out! I bought Tasso—do you know that I *bought* Tasso?—that I have bought it with my money, that you may have the pleasure of hearing me read it, as you said—as you call it? Should I spend the money, had I thought you would not come when I had got it—would not care to hear it read!'

Had she been in a more genial mood, Herbert would have told her that she was a simpleton for spending her money so; he would have told her that Tasso, read in the original, would have been to him unintelligible as Sanscrit. He had a faint remembrance of saying to mademoiselle that he should like to read Tasso, in answer to a remark that Tasso was her favourite of the Italian poets: but he had only made the observation casually, without seriously meaning anything. And she had been so foolish as to go and buy it!

'Will you come this evening and hear it begun?' she continued, breaking the pause, and speaking rather more graciously.

'Upon my word and honour, Bianca, I can't to-night,' he answered, feeling himself, between the two—the engagement made, and the engagement sought to be made—somewhat embarrassed. 'I will come another evening; you may depend upon me.'

'You say to me yesterday that you would come this evening; that I might depend upon you. Much you care!'

'But I could not help myself. An engagement arose, and I was obliged to fall in with it. I was, indeed. I'll hear Tasso another evening.'

'You will not break your paltry engagement at billiards to keep your word to a lady! C'est bien!'

'It—it is not altogether that,' replied Herbert, getting out of the reproach in the best manner he could. 'I have some business as well.'

She fastened her glistening eyes full upon him. There was an expression in them which Herbert neither understood nor liked. 'C'est très-bien!' she slowly repeated. 'I know where you are going, and for what!'

A smile—at her assumption of knowledge, and what it was worth—flitted over Herbert Dare's face. 'You are very wise,' said he.

'Take care of yourself, mon ami! C'est tout.'

'Now, mademoiselle, what is the matter, that you should look and speak in that manner?' he asked, still in the same light, good-humoured tone, as if he would fain pass the affair away in a joke. 'I'm sure I have enough bother upon me, without your adding to it.'

'What is your bother?'

'Never mind; it would give you no pleasure to know it. It is caused by Anthony—and be hanged to him!'

'Anthony is worth ten of you!' fiercely responded mademoiselle.

'Every one to his own liking,' carelessly remarked Herbert. 'It's well for me that all the world does not think as you do, mademoiselle.'

Mademoiselle looked as though she would like to beat him. 'So!' she foamed, drawing back her bloodless lips; 'now that your turn is served, Bianca Varsini may just be sent to the enfer! Garde-toi, mon camarade, je te dis.'

'Garde your voice,' replied Herbert. 'The cows yonder will think it's thundering. I wish my turn *was* served in more ways than one. What particular turn do you mean? If it's the buying of Tasso, I'll purchase it of you at full price.'

He could not help giving her a little chaff. It was what he would have called it—chaff. Exacting people fretted his generally easy temper, and he was beginning to fear that she would detain him until it was too late to see Anna.

But, on the latter score he was set at rest. With a few words, spoken in Italian, she nodded her head angrily at him, and turned away. Fierce words, in spite of their low tone, Herbert was sure, but he could not catch one of them. Had he caught them all, it would have been the same, so far as his understanding went. Excellent as the Signora Varsini's method of teaching Italian may have been, her lessons had not as yet been very efficient for Herbert Dare.

She crossed her hands before her, and went down the walk, taking the cross path to the house. Proceeding straight up to the school-room, she met Cyril on the stairs. He had apparently been dressing himself for the evening, and was going abroad to spend it. The governess caught abrupt hold of him, pulled him inside the school-room, and closed the door.

'I say, mademoiselle, what's that for?' asked Cyril, believing, by the fierce look of the young lady, that she was about to take some summary vengeance upon him.

'Cyril! you tell me. Where is it that Herbert

goes to of an evening? Every evening—every evening?'

Cyril stared excessively. 'What does it concern you to know where he goes, mademoiselle?' returned he.

'I want to know for my own reasons, and that's enough for you, Monsieur Cyril. Where does he go?'

'He goes out,' responded Cyril.

The governess stamped her foot petulantly. 'I could tell you that he goes out. I ask you where it is that he goes?'

'How should I know?' was Cyril's answer. 'It's not my business.'

'*Don't* you know?' demanded mademoiselle.

'No, that I don't,' heartily spoke Cyril. 'Do you suppose I watch him, mademoiselle? He'd pretty soon pitch into me if he caught me at that game. I dare say he goes to billiards.'

The supposition excited the ire of the governess. 'He has been telling you to say so!' she said, menace in every tone of her voice, in every gesture of her lifted hand.

Cyril opened his eyes to their utmost width. He could not comprehend why the governess should be asking him this, or why Herbert's movements should concern her. 'I know nothing at all about it,' he answered; and, so far, he spoke the truth. 'I don't know that Herbert goes anywhere particular in an evening. If he does, he would not tell me.'

She laid her hand heavily upon his shoulder; she brought her face—a sight to be seen in its livid earnestness—nearly in contact with his. 'Ecoutez, mon ami!' she whispered to the amazed Cyril. 'If you are going to play this game with me, I will play one upon you. Who wore the cloak to that boucherie, and got the money?—who ripped out the écossais side afterwards, leaving it all mangled and open? Think you, I don't know? Ah, ha! Monsieur Cyril, you cannot play the farce with me!'

Cyril's face turned of a ghastly whiteness, the drops of sweat breaking out over his forehead. 'Hush!' he cried, looking round in the instinct of terror, lest listeners should be at hand.

'Yes, you say "Hush!" she resumed. 'I will hush if you don't make me speak. I have hushed ever since. You tell me what I want to know, and I'll hush always.'

'Mademoiselle Varsini!' he cried, his manner too painfully earnest for her to doubt now that he spoke the truth, 'I declare that I know nothing of Herbert's movements. I don't know where he goes or what he does. When I told you I thought he went to billiards, I said what I thought might be the case. He may go to fifty places of an evening, for all I can tell. Tell me what it is you want found out, and I will try and do it.'

Cyril was not one to play the spy upon his brother; in fact, as he had just classically observed to the young lady, Herbert would have 'pitched into' him, had he found him attempting it. And serve him right! But Cyril saw that he was in her power; and that made all the difference. He would have tracked Herbert to the end of the earth at her bidding now.

But she did not bid him. Quite the contrary. She took her hand off Cyril's shoulder, opened the door, and said she did not want him any longer. 'It is no matter,' cried she; 'I wanted to learn something about Monsieur Herbert, for a reason; but if you do not know it, let it pass. It is no matter.'

'Cyril departed; first of all lifting his coward face. It looked a coward's then. 'You'll keep counsel, mademoiselle?'

'Yes; when people don't offend me, I don't offend them.'

She stood at the door after he had gone down, half in, half out of the room, apparently in deep thought. Presently footsteps were heard coming up, and she retreated and closed the door.

They were those of Herbert. He went on to his room, remained there a few minutes, and then came out again. Mademoiselle had got the door ajar as he descended. Her quick eye detected that he had been giving a few finishing touches to his toilette—brushing his hair, pulling down his wristbands, and various other little odds and ends.

'And you do that to play at billiards!' nodded she, inwardly, as she looked after him. 'I'll see, monsieur.'

Up-stairs with a soft step went she, to her own chamber. She reached from her box a long and loose dark-green cloak, like those worn by the women of France and Flanders, and a black silk quilted bonnet. It was her traveling attire, and she put it on now. Then she locked her chamber door behind her, and slipped down into the dining-room, with as soft a step as she had gone up.

Passing out at the open window, she kept tolerably under cover of the trees, and gained the road. It was quite dusk then, but she recognized Herbert before her, walking with a quick step. She put on a quick step also, keeping a convenient distance between herself and him. He went right through the town, to the London road, and struck into Atterly's field. The governess struck into it after him.

There she stopped under the hedge to reconnoitre. A few minutes, and she could distinguish he was joined by some young girl, whom he met with every token of respect and confi-

dence. A strange cry went forth on the evening air.

Herbert Dare was startled. 'What noise was that?' he exclaimed.

Anna had heard nothing. 'It must have been one of the lambs in the field, Herbert.'

'It was more like a human voice in pain,' observed Herbert. But they heard no more.

They began their usual walk—a few paces backward and forward, underneath the most sheltered part of the hedge, Anna taking his arm. Mademoiselle could see, as well as the darkness allowed her; but she could not hear. Her face, peeping out of the shadowy bonnet, was not unlike the face of a tiger.

She crawled away. She had noticed as she turned into the field an iron gate that led into the garden, which the hedge skirted. She crept round to it, found it locked, and mounted it. It had spikes on the top, but the signora would not have cared just then had she found herself impaled. She got safe over it, and then she considered how to reach the spot where they stood without their hearing her.

Would she be baffled? *She* be baffled! No. She stooped down, unlaced her boots, and stole softly on in her stockings. And there she was! nearly as close to them as shey were to each other.

Where had the signora heard those gentle, timid tones before? A lovely girl, looking little more than a child, in her modest Quaker dress, arose to her mind's eye. She had seen her with Miss Ashley. She—the signora—knelt down on the earth, the better to catch what was said.

'Listeners never hear any good of themselves.' It is a proverb too often exemplified, as the signora could have told that night. Herbert Dare was accounting for his late appearance, which he laid to the charge of the governess. He gave a description of the interview she had volunteered him in the garden at home—more ludicrous, perhaps, than true, but certainly not complimentary to the signora. Anna laughed; and the lady on the other side gathered that this was not the first time she had formed a topic of merriment for them. You should have seen her face. Pour plaisir, as she herself might have said.

She stayed the interview out. When it was over, and Herbert Dare had departed, she put on her boots and mounted the gate again; but she was not so agile this time, and a spike entered her wrist. Binding her handkerchief round it, to stop the blood, she returned to Pomeranian Knoll.

Five hundred questions were showered upon her when she entered the drawing-room, looking calm and impassable as ever. Not a tress of her elaborate braids of hair was out of place; not a fold awry in her dress. Much wonder had been excited by her non-appearance at tea: Minny had drummed a waltz on her chamber door, but mademoiselle would not open it, and would not speak.

'I cannot speak when I am lying down with those *vilaine* headaches,' remarked mademoiselle.

'Have you a headache, mademoiselle?' asked Mrs. Dare. 'Will you have a cup of tea brought up?'

Mademoiselle declined the tea. She was not thirsty.

'What have you done to your wrist, mademoiselle?' called out Herbert, who was stretched on a sofa, at the far end of the room.

'My wrist? Oh, I scratched it.'

'How did you manage that?'

'Ah, bah! it's nothing,' responded mademoiselle.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUARREL.

It is a grievous thing, when ill-feeling arises between brothers, that that ill-feeling should be cherished, instead of being subdued. But such was the case with Anthony and Herbert Dare. By the time that the sunny month of May came in, matters had grown to that pitch between them, that Mr. Dare found himself compelled to interfere. It was beginning to make things in the house uncomfortable. They would meet at meals, and not only abstain from speaking to each other, but take every possible opportunity of showing mutual and marked discourtesy. No positive outbreak between them had as yet taken place in the presence of the family; but it was only smouldering, and might be daily looked for.

Mr. Dare, so far as the original cause went, blamed his eldest son. There was no question that Anthony had been solely in fault. It was a dishonorable, ungenerous, unmanly act, to draw his brother into trouble, and to do it plausibly and deceitfully. At the *present* stage of the affair, Mr. Dare saw occasion to blame Herbert more than Anthony. 'It is you who keep up the ball, Herbert,' he said to him. 'If you would suffer the matter to die away, Anthony would.' 'Of course he would,' Herbert replied. 'He has got his turn served, and would be glad that it should end there.'

It was in vain that Mr. Dare talked to them. A dozen times did he recommend them to 'shake

hands and make it up.' Neither appeared inclined to take the advice. Anthony was sullen. He would have been content to let the affair drop quietly into oblivion; perhaps, as Herbert said, had been glad that it should so drop; but, make the slightest move towards it, he would not. Herbert openly said that *he'd* not shake hands. If Anthony wanted him ever to shake hands with him again, let him pay up.

There lay the grievance; the 'paying up.' The bills, not paid, were a terrible thorn in the side of Herbert Dare. He was responsible, and he knew not one hour from another but he might be arrested on them. To soothe matters between his sons, Mr. Dare would willingly have taken the charge of payment upon himself, but he had positively not the money to do it with. In point of fact, Mr. Dare was growing seriously embarrassed on his own score. He had had a great deal of trouble with his sons, with Anthony in particular, and he had grown sick and tired of helping them out of pecuniary difficulties. Still, he would have relieved Herbert of this one nightmare, had it been in his power. Herbert had been deluded into it, without any benefit to himself; therefore Mr. Dare's will was good, could he have managed it, to help him out. He told Herbert that he would see what he could do after a while.

It was an intensely hot day; far hotter than is customary at the season; and the afternoon sun streamed full on the windows of Pomeranian Knoll, suggesting thoughts of July, instead of May. A gay party—at any rate, a party dressed in gay attire—were crossing the hall to enter a carriage that waited at the door. Mr. Dare, Mrs. Dare, and Adelaide. Mrs. Dare had always been given to gay attire, and her daughters had caught the taste from her. They were going to dine at a friend's house, a few miles' distance from Helstonleigh. The invitation was for seven o'clock. It was now striking six, the dinner-hour at Mr. Dare's.

Minny, looking half melted, had perched herself upon the end of the balustrades to watch the departure.

'You'll fall, child,' said Mr. Dare.

Minny laughed, and said there was no danger of her falling.

Are we to have any strawberries for dinner, mamma?' asked Minny.

'You will have what I have thought proper to order,' replied Mrs. Dare, in rather a sharp tone. She was feeling hot, and cross. Something had put her out while dressing.

'I think you might wait for strawberries until they are ripe in our own garden; not buy them in the shops without any regard to cost,' interposed Mr. Dare, speaking for the general benefit, but not to any one in particular.

Minny dropped the subject. 'Your dress is turned up, Adelaide,' said she.

Adelaide looked languidly behind her, and a maid, who had followed them down-stairs, advanced, and put to rights the refractory dress; a handsome dress of pink, glistening with its own richness. At that moment Anthony entered the hall. He had just come to dinner, and looked in a very ill-humour.

'How late you'll be!' he cried.

'Not at all. We shall get there in an hour.'

They swept out at the door, Mrs. Dare and Adelaide. Mr. Dare was about to follow them, when a sudden thought appeared to strike him, and he turned back and addressed Anthony.

'You young men take care that you don't get quarrelling with each other. Do you hear, Anthony?'

'I hear,' ungraciously replied Anthony, not turning round to speak, but continuing his way up-stairs to his dressing-room. He probably regarded the injunction with slighting contempt, for it was too much in Anthony Dare's nature so to regard all advice, of whatever kind. Nevertheless it had been well that he had paid heed to it. It had been well that that last word to his father had been one of affection!

The dinner was served. Anthony, in the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Dare, taking the head. Rosa, with a show of great parade and ceremony, assumed the seat opposite to him, and said she should be mistress. Minny responded that Rosa was not going to be mistress over *her*, and the governess desired Miss Rosa not to talk so loud. Rather derogatory checks, these, to the dignity of a 'mistress.'

Herbert was not at table. Irregular as the young Dares were in many of their habits, they were generally home for dinner. Minny wondered aloud where Herbert was. Anthony replied that he was 'skulking.'

'Skulking!' echoed Minny.

'Yes, skulking,' angrily repeated Anthony. He quitted the office at three o'clock, and has never been near it since. And the governor left at four!' he added, in a tone that seemed to say he considered that also a grievance.

'Where did Herbert go to?' asked Rosa.

'I don't know,' responded Anthony. 'I only know that I had a double share of work to do.'

Anthony Dare was no friend to work. And the having had to do a little more than he would have done, had Herbert remained at his post, had aggravated his temper considerably.

'Why should Monsieur Herbert go away and leave you his work to do?' inquired the gover-

ness, lifting her eyes from her plate to Anthony.

'I shall take care to ask him why,' returned Anthony.

'It is not fair that he should,' continued mademoiselle. 'I'd not have done it for him, Monsieur Anthony.'

'Neither should I, had I not been obliged,' said Anthony, not in the least relaxing from his ill-humour, either of looks or tone. 'It was work that had to be done before post-time, and one of our clerks is away on business to-day.'

The dinner proceeded to its close. Joseph hesitated, unwilling to remove the cloth. 'Is it to be left on for Mr. Herbert?' he asked.

'No!' imperiously answered Anthony. 'If he cannot come in for dinner, dinner shall not be kept for him.'

'Cook is keeping the things hot, sir.'

'Then tell her to save herself the trouble.'

So the cloth was removed, and the dessert put on. To Minny's inexpressible disappointment it turned out that there were no strawberries. This put *her* in an ill-humour, and she quitted the table and the room, declaring she would not touch anything else. Mademoiselle Varsini called her back, and ordered her to her seat: she would not permit so great a breach of discipline. Cyril and George, who were not under the control of mademoiselle, gulped down a glass of wine, and hastened out to keep an engagement. It was a very innocent one; a great match at cricket had been organized for the evening, by some of the old college boys; and Cyril and George were amongst the players. It has never been mentioned that Mr. Ashley, in his strict sense of justice, had allowed to Cyril the privilege of spending his evenings at home, five nights in the week, as he did to William Halliburton.

The rest remained at table. Minny, per force; Rosa, to eat an unlimited quantity of oranges; Mademoiselle Varsini, because it was the custom to remain. But mademoiselle soon rose and withdrew with her pupils; Anthony was not showing himself to be a particularly sociable companion. He had not touched the dessert: but seemed to be drinking a good deal of wine.

As they were going out of the room, Herbert bustled in. 'Now, then, take care!' cried he: for Minny, paying little attention to her way, had gone full butt at him.

'Oh! Herbert, can't you see?' cried she, dolefully, rubbing her head. 'What made you so late? The dinner's gone away.'

'It can be brought in again,' replied Herbert, carelessly. 'Comme il est chaud! n'est-ce pas, mademoiselle?'

This last was addressed to the governess. Rosa screamed out with laughter at his bad French, and mademoiselle smiled. 'You get on in French like you do in Italian, Monsieur Herbert,' cried she. 'And that is what you call—backward.'

Herbert laughed good-humouredly. He did not know what particular mistake he had made; truth to say, he did not care. They withdrew, and he rang the bell for his dinner.

'Mind, Herbert,' cried Minny, putting in her head again at the door, 'papa said you were not to quarrel.'

Better, perhaps, that she had not said it! Who can tell?

The brothers remained alone. Anthony sullen, and, as yet, silent. He appeared to have emptied the port wine decanter, and to be beginning at the sherry! Herbert strolled past him; supreme indifference in his manner—some might have said contempt—and stood just outside the window, whistling.

You have not forgotten that this dining-room window opened to the ground. The apartment was long and somewhat narrow, the window large and high, and opening in the middle, after the manner of a French one. The door was at one end of the room; the window at the other.

Anthony was in too quarrelsome a mood to remain silent long. He began the skirmish by demanding what Herbert meant by absenting himself from the office for the afternoon, and where he had been. His resentful tone, his authoritative words, not being calculated to win any very civil answer.

They did not win one from Herbert. *His* tone was resentful, too; his words were coolly aggravating. Anthony was not his master; when he was, he might, perhaps, answer him. Such was their purport.

A hot interchange of words ensued. Nothing more. Anthony remained at the table; Herbert, half in, half out at the window, leaning against its frame. When Joseph returned to put things in readiness for Herbert's dinner, they had subsided into quietness. It was but a lull in the storm.

Joseph placed the dessert nearer Anthony's end of the table, and laid his cloth across the other end. Herbert came inside the room. 'What a time you are with the dinner, Joseph!' cried he. 'One would think it was being cooked.'

'Cook's warming it, sir.'

'Warming it!' echoed Herbert. 'Why couldn't she have kept it warm? She might be sure I should be home to dinner.'

'She was keeping it warm, sir, but Mr. Anthony ordered it to be put away.'

Now, the man had really no intention of making mischief when he said this: that it might

cause ill-blood between the brothers, never crossed his mind. He was only anxious that he and his fellow-servant, the cook, should stand free of blame; for the young Dares, when displeased with the servants, were not in the habit of sparing them. Herbert turned to Anthony.

'What business have you to interfere with my dinner? Or with anything else that concerns me?'

'I choose to make it my business,' insolently retorted Anthony.

At this juncture Joseph left the room. He had finished laying the cloth, and had no cause to stop in it. Better perhaps that he had stopped! Surely they would not have proceeded to extremities, the brothers, before their servant! In a short while sounds, as if both were in a terrible state of fury, resounded through the house from the dining-room. The sounds did not reach the kitchen, which was partially detached from the house; but the young ladies heard them, and came running out of the drawing-room.

The governess was in the school-room. The noise penetrated even there. She also came forth, and saw her two pupils extended over the balustrades, listening. At any other time mademoiselle would have reproved them: now she crept down and leaned over in company.

'What can be the matter?' whispered she.

'Papa told them not to quarrel!' was all the answer, uttered by Minny.

It was a terrible quarrel—there was little doubt of that; no child's play. Passionate bursts of fury rose incessantly, now from one, now from the other, now from both. Hot recrimination; words that were not fitted for unaccustomed ears—or for any ears, for the matter of that—rose high and loud. The governess turned pale, and Minny burst into tears.

'Somebody ought to go into the room,' said Rosa. 'Minny, you go! Tell them to be quiet.'

'I am afraid,' replied Minny.

'So am I.'

A fearful sound: an explosion louder than all the rest. A noise as if some heavy weight had been thrown down. Had it come to blows? Minny shrieked aloud, and at the same moment Joseph was seen coming along with a tray, and Herbert's hot dinner upon it.

His presence seemed to impart a sense of courage, and Rosa and Minny flew down, followed by the governess. Herbert had been knocked down by Anthony. He was gathering himself up when Joseph opened the door. Gathering himself up in a tempest of passion, his white face one living fury, as he caught hold of a knife from the table and rushed upon Anthony.

But Joseph was too quick for him. The man dashed his tray on the table, seized hold of Herbert, and turned the uplifted knife downwards. 'For heaven's sake, sir, recollect yourself!' said he.

Recollect himself then? No. Persons, who put themselves into that mad state of passion, cannot 'recollect' themselves. Joseph kept fast his hold, and the dining-room became alive with shrieks—with sobbing tears.

They proceeded from Rosa and Minny. They pulled their brothers by the coats, they implored, they entreated. The women servants came flying from the kitchen, and the Italian governess asked the two gentlemen in French whether they were not ashamed of themselves.

Perhaps they were. At any rate, the quarrel was, for the time, put a stop to. Herbert flung the knife upon the table, and turned his white face, savage still, upon his brother.

'Take care of yourself, though!' cried he, in a marked tone: 'I swear you shall have it, yet.'

They pulled Anthony out of the room, Rosa and Minny; or it is difficult to say what rejoinder he might have made, or how violently the quarrel might have been renewed. It was certain that he had taken more wine than was good for him; and that, generally speaking, did not improve the temper of Anthony Dare. Mademoiselle Varsini walked by his side, talking volubly in French. Whether she was sympathizing or scolding, Anthony did not know. Not particularly bright at understanding French at the best of times, even when spoken slowly, he could not, in his present excitement, catch the meaning of a single word. Entering the drawing-room, he threw himself upon the sofa, intending to smooth down his ruffled plumage by taking a nap.

Herbert meanwhile had remained in the dining-room, smoothing down *his* ruffled plumage. Joseph and the cook were bending over the *debris* on the carpet. When Joseph dashed down his tray on the table, the dish of potatoes had bounded *off;* thereby, both dish and potatoes coming to grief. Herbert sat down and made a good dinner. His was not a sullen temper; and, unlike Anthony, the affair once over, he was soon himself again. Should they come in contact again directly, there was no telling how it would end, or what might ensue. His dinner over, he went by-and-by to the drawing-room. Joseph had just entered, and was arousing Anthony from the sleep he had dropped into.

'One of the waiters from the Star-and-Garter has come, sir. He says Lord Hawkesley has sent him to say that the gentlemen are waiting for you.'

'I can't go, tell him,' responded Anthony, speaking as he looked, thoroughly out of sorts. 'I am not going out to night. Here! Joseph!'

for the man was turning away with the message.

'Sir?'

'Take these, and bring me my slippers.'

'These' were his boots, which he, not very politely, kicked off in the ladies' presence, and sent flying after Joseph. The man stooped to pick them up, and was carrying them away.

'Here!—what a hurry you are in!' began Anthony again. 'Take lights up to my chamber, and the brandy, and some cold water. I shall make myself comfortable there for the night. This room's unbearable, with its present company.

This last was a shaft levelled at Herbert. He did not retort, for a wonder. In fact, Anthony afforded little time for it. Before the words had well left his lips, he had quitted the room. Herbert began to whistle; its very tone an insolent one.

It appeared nearly certain that the unpleasantness was not yet over; and Rosa audibly wished her papa was at home. Joseph carried to Anthony's room what he required, and then brought the tea to the drawing-room. Herbert said he should take tea with them. It was rather unusual for him to do so: it was very unusual for Anthony not to go out. Their sisters felt sure that they were only staying in to renew hostilities; and again Rosa almost passionately wished for the presence of her father.

It was dusk by the time tea was over. Herbert rose to leave the room. 'Where are you going?' cried out mademoiselle, sharply, after him.

'That's my business,' he replied, not in too conciliatory a tone. Perhaps he took the question to proceed from one of his sisters, for he was outside the door when it reached him.

'He is going into Anthony's room,' cried Rosa, turning very pale, as they heard him run up stairs. 'Oh, mademoiselle, what can be done? I think I'll call Joseph.'

'Hush!' cried mademoiselle. 'Wait you still here. I will go and see.'

She stole out of the room and up the stairs, intending to reconnoitre. But she had no time. Herbert was coming down again, and she could only slip inside the school-room door, and peep out. He had evidently been up stairs for his cloak, for he was putting it on as he descended.

'The cloak on a hot night like this!' said mademoiselle, mentally. 'He must want to disguise himself.'

She stopped to listen. Joseph had come up the stairs, bringing something to Anthony, and Herbert arrested him, speaking in a low tone.

'Don't let there be any mistake to-night about the dining-room window, Joseph. I can't think how you could have been so stupid last night.'

'Sir, I assure you I left it undone, as usual,' replied Joseph. 'It must have been master who fastened it.'

'Well, take care that it does not occur,' said Herbert. 'I expect to be in between ten and eleven; but I may be later, and I don't want to ring you up again.'

Herbert went swiftly down the stairs and out, choosing his egress by the way, as it appeared, that he intended to enter—the dining-room window. Joseph proceeded to Anthony's chamber; and the governess returned to her frightened pupils in the drawing-room.

'A la bonne heure!' she said to them. 'Monsieur Herbert is gone out, and I heard him say to Joseph that he was gone for the evening.'

'Then it's all safe!' cried Minny. And she began dancing round the room in her gladness. 'Mademoiselle, how pale you look.'

Mademoiselle had sat down in her place before the tea-tray, and was leaning her cheek upon her hand. She was certainly looking unusually pale.

'Ennugh to make me,' she said, in answer to Minny. 'If there were to be this disturbance often in the house, I would not stop in it for double my *appointment*. It has given me one of those *vilaine* headaches, and I think I shall go to bed. You will not be afraid to stay up alone, mesdemoiselles?'

'There is nothing to be afraid of now,' promptly answered Rosa, who had far rather be without her governess's company than with it. 'Don't sit up for us, mademoiselle.'

'Then I will go at once,' said mademoiselle. And she wished them good night, and retired to her chamber.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNA LYNN'S DILEMMA.

It was a lovely evening. One of those warm, still evenings that May sometimes brings us, when gnats hum in the air, and the trees are at rest. The day had been intensely hot; the evening was little less so, and Anna Lynn leaned over the gate of their garden, striving to catch what of freshness there might be in the coming night. The garish day was fading into moonlight; the distant Malvern Hills grew fainter and fainter on the view; the little lambs in the field—getting great lambs now, some of them—had long lain

down to rest; and the Thursday evening bells came chiming pleasantly on the ear from Helstonleigh.

'How late he is to-night!' murmured Anna. 'If he does not come soon, I shall not be able to stay out.'

Even as the words passed her lips, a faint movement might be distinguished in the obscurity of the night, telling of the advent of Herbert Dare. Anna looked round to see that the windows were clear from prying eyes, and went forth to meet him.

He had halted at the usual place, under cover of the hedge. The hedge of sweetbriar, skirting that side garden into which the Signora Varsini had made good her *entree*, in the gratification of her curiosity. A shady walk, and a quiet one—very little fear there of overlookers.

'Herbert, thee art late!' cried Anna.

'A good thing I was able to come at all,' responded Herbert, taking Anna's arm within his own. 'I thought at one time I must have remained at home to chastise my brother Anthony.'

'Chastise thy brother Anthony!' repeated Anna in astonishment.

Herbert, for the first time, told her of the unpleasantness that existed between his brother and himself. He did not speak of the precise cause; but simply said Anthony had behaved ill to him, and drawn down upon him trouble and vexation. Anna was all sympathy. Had Herbert told her the offence had lain on his side, not on Anthony's, her entire sympathy had still been his. She deemed Herbert everything that was good, and great, and worthy. Anthony—what little she knew of him—she did not like.

'Herbert, maybe he will be striking thee in secret, when thee art unprepared.'

'Let him!' carelessly replied Herbert. 'I can strike again. I am stronger than he is. I know one thing—that either he or I must leave my father's house, and get lodgings out—we can't stop in it together.'

'It would be he to leave it, would it not, Herbert? Thy father would not be so unjust as to turn thee out for thy brother's fault.'

'I don't know about that,' said Herbert. 'I expect it is I who should have to go. Anthony is the eldest, and my mother's favourite.'

Anna lifted her hand, in her innocent surprise. Anthony the favourite by the side of Herbert? She could not understand how so great an anomalism could be.

Interested in the topic, the time slipped on and on. During a moment of silence, when they had halted in their walk, they heard strike out from Helstonleigh what was called the ten o'clock bell, a bell that boomed out over the city every night for ten minutes before ten o'clock. The sound startled Anna. She had indeed overstayed her time.

'One moment, Anna,' cried Herbert, as she was preparing to fly off. 'There can't be any such hurry. Hester will not be going to bed yet, on a hot night like this. I wanted you to give me back that book, if you have done with it. It is not mine, and I have been asked for it.'

Truth to say, Anna would be glad to give it back. The book was Moore's 'Lalla Rookh,' and Anna had been upon thorns all the time she had been reading it, lest by some unlucky mishap it might get to the sight of Patience. *She* thought it everything that was beautiful; she had read pages of it over and over again; they wore for her a strange enchantment; but she had a shrewd suspicion that neither the book nor her reading it would be approved by Patience.

'I'll bring it out to thee at once, Herbert, if I can,' she hastily said. 'If not, I will give it thee to-morrow evening.'

'Not so fast, young lady,' said Herbert, laughing, and detaining her. 'You may not come back. I'll wish you good night now.'

'Nay, please thee let me go. What will Hester say to me?'

Scarcely giving a moment to the adieu, Anna sped along with swift feet to the garden gate. But the moment she was inside that separating barrier, and had turned the key, she began—little dissembler that she was—to step on slowly, in a careless, *nonchalant* manner, looking up at the sky, turning her head to the trees, in no more hurry apparently than if bed time were three hours off. She had seen Hester Dell standing at the house-door.

'Child,' said Hester, gravely, 'thee should not stay out so late as this.'

'It is so warm a night, Hester.'

'But thee should not be beyond the premises. Patience would not like it. It is past thy bed time, too. Patience's sleeping-draught has not come,' she added, turning to another subject.

'Her sleeping-draught not come!' repeated Anna, in surprise.

'It has not. I have been expecting the boy to knock every minute, or I should have come to see after you. Friend Parry may have forgotten it.'

'Why, of course he must have forgotten it,' said Anna, inwardly promising to give the boy a sixpence for his forgetfulness. 'The medicine always comes in the morning. Will Patience sleep without it?'

'I fear me not. What does thee think? Suppose I were to run for it?'

'Yes, do, Hester.'

They went in-doors, Hester shutting the back door and locking it. She put on her shawl and bonnet, and was going out at the front door when the clock struck ten.

'It is ten o'clock, child,' she said to Anna. 'Thee go to bed. Thee need not sit up. I'll take the latch-key with me and let myself in.'

'Oh, Hester! I don't want to go to bed yet,' returned Anna in a grumbling tone. 'It is like a summer's evening.'

'But thee had better, child,' urged Hester. 'Patience has been angry with me once or twice, saying I suffer thee to sit up late. A pretty budget she will be telling thy father on his return. Thee go to bed. Thy candle is ready here on the slab. Good night.'

Hester departed, shutting fast the door, and carrying with her the latch-key. Anna, fully convinced that friend Parry's forgetfulness, or the boy's, must have been designed as a special favour to herself, went softly into the best parlour to get the book out of her pretty work-table.

But the room was dark, and Anna could not find her keys. She believed she had left her keys on the top of this very work-table; but feel as she would, she could not put her hands upon them. With a word of impatience, lest, with all her hurry, Herbert Dare should be gone before she could get to him with the book, she went to the kitchen, lighted the chamber candle, spoken of by Hester, as placed ready for her use, and carried it into the parlour.

Her keys were found on the mantel-piece. She unlocked the drawer, took from it the book, blew the candle out, and ran through the garden to the field.

Another minute, and Herbert would have left. He was turning away then. In truth, he had not in the least expected to see Anna back again.

'Then you have been able to come!' he exclaimed, in his surprise.

'Hester is gone out,' explained Anna. 'Friend Parry has forgotten to send Patience's medicine, and Hester has gone for it. Herbert, thee only think! But for Hester's expecting Parry's boy to knock at the door, she would have come out here searching for me! She said she would. I must never forget the time again. There's the book, and thank thee. I am sorry and yet glad to give it thee back.'

'Is that not a paradox!' asked Herbert, with a smile. 'I do not know why you should be either sorry or glad: to be both seems inexplicable.'

'I am sorry to lose it: it is the most charming book I have read, and but for Patience I should like to have kept it for ever,' returned Anna, with enthusiasm. 'But I always felt afraid of Hester's finding it and carrying it up to Patience. Patience would be angry; and she might tell my father. That is why I am glad to give it back to thee.'

'Why did you not lock it up?' asked Herbert.

'I did lock it up. I locked it in my work-table drawer. But I forget to put my keys in my pocket: I leave them about anywhere. I should have been out with it sooner, but that I could not find the keys.'

Anna was in no momentary hurry to run in now. Hester was safe for full twenty minutes to come, therefore the haste need not be so great. She knew that it was past her bed-time, and that Patience would be wondering (unless by great good fortune Patience should have dropped asleep,) why she did not go in to wish her good night. But these reflections Anna conveniently ignored, in the charm of remaining longer to talk about the book. She told Herbert that she had been copying the engravings, but she must put the drawings in some safe place before Patience was about again. 'Tell me the time, please,' she suddenly said, bringing her chatter to a standstill.

Herbert took out his watch, and held its face towards the moon. 'It is twelve minutes past ten.'

'Then I must be going in,' said Anna. 'She could be back in twenty minutes, and she must not find me out again.'

Herbert turned with her, and walked to the gate; pacing slowly, both of them, and talking still. He turned in at the gate with her. And Anna made no demur. No fear of his being seen. Patience was as safe in bed as if she had been chained there, and Hester could not be back quite yet. Arrived at the door, shut as Anna had left it, Herbert put out his hand. 'I suppose I must bid you a final good-night now, Anna,' he said, in a low tone.

'That thee must. I have to come down the garden again to lock the gate after thee. And Hester may not be more than three or four minutes longer. Good-night to thee, Herbert.'

'Let me see that it is all safe for you, against you do go in,' said Herbert, laying his hand on the handle of the door to open it.

To open it? Nay: he could not open it. The handle resisted his efforts. 'Did you lock it, Anna?'

Anna smiled at what she thought his awkwardness. 'Thee art turning it the wrong way, Herbert. See!'

He withdrew his hand to give place to hers, and she turned the handle, softly and gently, the contrary way; that is, she essayed to turn it. But it would not turn for her, any more than it had

for Herbert Dare. A sick feeling of terror rushed over Anna, as the conviction of the truth grew upon her. Hester Dell had returned, and she was locked out!

In good truth, it was no less a calamity. Hester Dell had not gone far from the door on her errand, when she met the doctor's boy with his basket, hastening up with the medicine. 'I was just coming after it,' said Hester to him. 'Whatever brings thee so late?'

'Mr. Parry was called out this morning before he had time to make it up, and he has but just come home,' was the boy's reply. 'Better late than never,' he somewhat saucily added.

'Well, so it is,' acquiesced Hester, who rarely gave anything but a meek retort. And she turned back home, letting herself in with the latch-key. The house appeared precisely as she had left it, save that Anna's candle had disappeared from the mahogany slab in the passage. 'That's right! the child's gone to bed,' soliloquised she.

She proceeded to go to bed herself. The Quaker's was an early household. All Hester had to do now, was to give Patience her sleeping-draught. 'Let me see,' continued Hester, still in soliloquy, 'I think I did lock the back door.'

To make sure, she tried the key and found it was not locked. Rather wondering, for she certainly thought she *had* locked it, but dismissing the subject the next minute from her thoughts, she locked it now, and took the key out. Then she continued her way up to Patience. Patience, lying there lonely and dull with her night-light, turned her eyes on Hester.

'Did thee think we had forgotten thee, Patience? Parry has been out all day, the boy says, and the physic is but this minute come.'

'Where's Anna?' inquired Patience.

'She is gone to bed.'

'Why did she not come to me as usual?'

'Did she not come?' asked Hester.

'I have seen nothing of her all the evening.'

'Maybe she thought thee'd be dozing,' observed Hester, bringing forward the sleeping draught, which she had been pouring into a wine-glass. She said no more. Her private opinion was, that Anna had purposely abstained from the visit, lest she should get a scolding for going to bed late, her usual hour being half-past nine. Neither did Patience say any more. She was feeling that Anna might be a little less ungrateful. She drank the draught, and Hester went to bed.

And poor Anna? To describe her dismay, her consternation, would be a useless attempt. The doors were fast—the windows were fast. Herbert Dare essayed to soothe her, but she would not be soothed. She sat down on the step of the back door, and cried bitterly: all her apprehension being for the terrible scolding she should get from Patience, were it found out; the worse than scolding she might get, if Patience told her father.

To give Herbert Dare his due, he felt truly vexed at the dilemma, for Anna's sake. Could he have let her in by getting down a chimney himself, or in any other impromptu way, and so opened the door for her, he would have done it. 'Don't cry, Anna,' he entreated, 'don't cry! I'll take care of you. Nothing shall harm you. I'll not go away,'

The more he talked, the more she cried. Very like a little child. Had Herbert Dare known how to break the glass without noise, he would have taken out a pane in the kitchen window, and so got to the fastening, and opened it. Anna, in worse terror than ever, begged him not to attempt it. It would be sure to arouse Hester.

'But you'll be so cold, child, staying here all night!' he urged. 'You are shivering now.

Anna was shivering: shivering with vexation and fear. Herbert thought it would be better that he should boldly knock up Hester; and he suggested it: nay, he pressed it. But the proposal sounded more alarming to Anna than any that had gone before it. It seemed that there was nothing to be done.

How long she sat there, crying and shivering and refusing to be comforted or to hear reason, she could not tell. Like half the night, it seemed. But Anna, you must remember, was counting time by her own state of mind, not by the clock. Suddenly a bright thought, as a ray of light, flashed into her brain.

'There's the pantry window,' she cried, arresting her tears. 'How could I ever have forgotten it? There is no glass, and thee art strong enough to push in the wire.'

This pantry window Herbert Dare had known nothing of. It was at the side of the house, thickly surrounded by shrubs; a square window frame, protected by wire. He fought his way to it amid the thick shrubs; but to get in proved a work of time and difficulty. The window was at some height from the ground, the wire strong. Anna sat on the door-step, never stirring, leaving him to get in if he could, her tears falling yet, and terrific visions of Patience's anger chasing each other through her mind. And the night went on.

'Anna!'

She could have shouted forth a cry of delight as she leaped up. He had got in, had found his way to the kitchen window, had gently raised it, and was softly calling to her. Some little difficulty yet, but with Herbert's assistance she was safely landed inside, a great tear in her dress

being the only damage. He had managed to get a light by means of some fusees in his pocket, and had lighted a candle. Anna sat down on a chair, her face radiant through her tears. 'How shall I ever thank thee?'

He was looking at his fingers, with a half serious, half mocking expression of dismay. The wire had torn them in many places, and they were bleeding. 'I could have got in quicker had I forced the wire out in the middle,' he observed, 'but that would have told tales. I got it away from the side, and have pushed it back again in its place as well as I could. Perhaps it may escape notice.'

'How shall I ever thank thee?' was all Anna could repeat in her gratitude.

'Now you know what you must do, Anna,' said he. 'I am going to jump out through the window, and be off home. You must shut it and fasten it after me: I'd shut it myself, after I'm out, but that these stains on my fingers would go on the frame. And when you leave the kitchen, remember to turn the key of the door outside. I found it turned. Do you understand? And now farewell, my little locked-out princess. Don't say I have not worked wonders for you, as the good spirits do in the fairy tales.'

She caught his hand in her glad delight. She looked at him with a face full of gratitude. Herbert Dare bent down and took a kiss from the upturned face. Perhaps he thought he had fairly earned the reward. Then he proceeded to swing himself through the window, feeling delighted that he had been able to get Anna out of the dilemma.

Before Helstonleigh arose the next morning, a startling report was circulating through the city, the very air teeming with it. A report that Anthony Dare had been killed in the night by his brother Herbert.

CHAPTER X.

THE COMMOTION.

The streets of Helstonleigh, lying so still and quiet in the moonlight, were broken in upon by the noisy sound of a carriage, bowling through them. A carriage that was abroad late. It wanted a very short period to the time when the church clocks would boom out the two hours after midnight. Time, surely, for all sober people to be in bed!

The carriage contained Mr. Dare, his wife, and daughter. They went, as you may remember, to a dinner party in the country. The dinner was succeeded by an evening gathering, and it was nearly one o'clock when they left the house to return. It wanted but five minutes to two when the carriage stopped at their own home, and sleepy Joseph opened the door to them.

'All in bed?' asked Mr. Dare, as he bustled into the hall.

'I believe so, sir,' answered Joseph, as carelessly as he could speak. Mr. Dare, he was aware, alluded to his sons; and, not being by any means sure upon the point, Joseph was willing to evade further questioning.

Two of the maids came forward—the lady's maid, as she was called in the family, and Betsy. Betsy was no other than our old friend, Betsy Carter: once the little maid-of-all-work at Mrs. Halliburton's; risen now to be a very fine housemaid at Mrs. Dare's. They had sat up to attend upon Mrs. Dare and Adelaide.

Mr. Dare had been a long while in the habit of smoking a pipe before he went to bed. He would have told you that he could not do without it. Did business or pleasure take him out, he must have his pipe when he returned, however late it might be.

'How hot it is!' he exclaimed, throwing back his coat. 'Leave the hall door open, Joseph: I'll sit outside. Get me my pipe.'

Joseph looked for the pipe in its appointed resting-place, and could not see it. It was a small, handsome pipe, silver-mounted, with an amber mouth-piece. The tobacco-jar was there, but Joseph could see nothing of the pipe.

'Law! I remember!' exclaimed Betsy. 'Master had left it in the dining-room last night, and I put it under the sideboard when I was doing the room this morning, intending to bring it away. I'll go and get it.'

Snatching the candle from Joseph's hand, she turned hastily into the dining-room. Not, however, as hastily as she came out of it. She burst out, uttering a succession of piercing shrieks, and laid hold of Joseph. The shrieks echoed through the house up-stairs and down, and Mr. Dare came in.

'Why, what on earth's the matter, girl?' cried he. 'Have you seen a ghost?'

'Oh, sir! Oh, Joseph, don't loose go of me; Mr. Anthony's a-lying in there, dead!'

'Don't be a simpleton,' responded Mr. Dare, staring at Betsy.

Joseph gave rather a less complimentary reprimand, and shook the girl off. But, all in a moment, even as the words left his lips, there rose up before his mind's eye the vision of the past evening: the quarrel, the threats, the violence between Anthony and Herbert. A strange apprehension seated itself in the man's mind.

'Be still, you donkey!' he whispered to Betsy,

his voice scarcely audible, his manner subdued to meekness, which, of itself, spoke of dread. 'I'll go in and see.'

Taking the candle, he went into the dining-room. Mr. Dare followed. The worst thought that occured to Mr. Dare was, that Anthony might have taken more wine than was good for him, and had fallen down, helpless, in the dining-room. Unhappily, Anthony had been known so to transgress. Only a week or two before——but let that pass: it has nothing to do with us now.

Mr. Dare followed Joseph in. At the upper end of the room, near the window, lay some one on the ground. Not close to the window; in the space between the upper corner of the dining table and the angle made by the two sides of the room It was surely Anthony. He was lying on his side, his head thrown back, and his face upturned. A ghastly face, which sent poor Joseph's pulses bounding on with a terrible fear as he looked down at it. The same face which had scared Betsy when *she* looked down.

'He is stark dead!' whispered Joseph, with a shiver, to Mr. Dare.

Mr. Dare, his own life-blood seeming to have stopped, bent over his son by the light of the candle. Anthony appeared to be not only dead, but cold. In his terrible shock, his agitation, he still remembered that it was well, if possible, to spare the sight to his wife and daughter. Mrs. Dare and Adelaide, alarmed by Betsy's screams, had run down-stairs, and were now hastening into the room.

'Go back! go back!' cried Mr. Dare, fencing them away with his hands. 'Adelaide, you must not come in! Julia,' he added to his wife, in a tone of imploring entreaty, 'go up-stairs, and keep back Adelaide.'

He half led, half pushed them across the hall. Mrs. Dare had never in all her life seen his face as she saw it now—a face of terror. She caught the fear; vaguely enough, it must be confessed, for she had not heard Anthony's name, as yet, mentioned in connexion with it.

'What is it?' she asked, holding by the balustrades. 'What is there in the dining-room?'

'I don't know what it is,' replied Mr. Dare, from between his white lips. 'Go up-stairs! Adelaide, go up-stairs with your mother.'

Mr. Dare was stopped by screams. While he was preventing immediate terror to his wife and daughter, the lady's maid, her curiosity excited beyond repression, had slipped into the dining-room, and peeped over Joseph's shoulder. What she had expected to see she perhaps could not have stated: what she did see was far worse than her wildest fears that she lost sense of everything, save the moment's fear; and shriek after shriek echoed from her.

One entire scene of confusion ensued. Mrs. Dare tried to force her way to the room; Adelaide screamed, she knew not at what; Betsy began bewailing Mr. Anthony, by name, in wild words. And the sleepers, up stairs, came flocking out of their chambers, with trembling limbs and white faces; any garment, that came uppermost to hand, flung upon them.

Mr. Dare put his back against the dining-room door. 'Girls, go back! Julia, go back, for the love of Heaven! Mademoiselle, is that you? Be so good as stay where you are, and keep Rosa and Minny with you.'

'Mais, qu'est-ce que c'est, donc?' exclaimed mademoiselle, speaking in her wonder, in her most familiar tongue, and, truth to say, paying little heed to Mr. Dare's injunction. 'Y a-t-il du mal-heur arrivé?'

Betsy went up to her. Betsy recognized her as one not of the family, to whom she could ease her overflowing mind. The same thought had occurred to Betsy as to Joseph. 'Poor Mr. Anthony's lying in there dead, mamzel,' she whispered. 'Mr. Herbert must have killed him.'

Mademoiselle, thus startled, shrieked out terribly. Unheeding the request of Mr. Dare, unmindful of the deficiencies or want of elegance in her costume, which consisted of what she called a *peignoir*, and a borderless calico night-cap, she flew down to the hall. And, taking advantage of a minute's quitting of the door by Mr. Dare, she slipped into the dining-room. Some of the others slipped in, and a sad scene of confusion ensued. What with wife, governess, servants, and children, Mr. Dare was powerless to stop it. Mademoiselle went straight up, gave one look, and staggered back against the wall.

'C'est vrai!' she muttered. 'C'est Monsieur Anthony.'

'It is Anthony,' shivered Mr. Dare. 'I fear—I fear violence has been done him.'

The governess was breathing heavily. She looked quite as ghastly as did that upturned face.

'But why should it be?' she asked, in English. 'Who has done it?'

Ah, who had done it! Joseph's frightened face seemed to say that he could tell if he dared. Cyril bounded into the room, and took hold of one of the arms. But he let it fall again.

'It is rigid!' he gasped. 'Is he dead? Father, he can't be dead!'

Mr. Dare hurried Joseph from the room—hurried him across the hall to the door. He, Mr. Dare, was not so agitated as scarcely to know what he was about.

'Make all haste,' he said; 'the nearest surgeon.'

'Master,' whispered Joseph, turning round

when he was outside the door, and his agitation appeared to be as great as his master's; 'I'm afraid it's Mr. Herbert who has done this.'

'Why?' sharply asked Mr. Dare.

'They had a dreadful quarrel this evening, sir, after you left. Mr. Herbert drew a knife upon his brother. I got in just in time to stop bloodshed, or it might have happened then.'

Mr. Dare suppressed a groan.

'You go off, Joseph, and get a doctor here. He may not be past revival. Mr. Milbank is the nearest. If he is at home, bring him; if not, get anybody.'

Joseph, never staying for his hat, sped across the lawn, and gained the entrance gate at the very moment that a gig was passing. By the light of a gas lamp, Joseph saw that it contained Mr. Glenn, the surgeon, driven by his servant. He had been on a late professional visit in the country. Joseph shouted out, running before the horse in his excitement, and the man pulled up.

'What's the matter, Joseph?' asked Mr. Glenn. 'Anybody ill?'

Somewhat curious to say, Mr. Glenn was the usual medical attendant of the Dares. Joseph explained as well as he could, that Mr. Anthony had been found lying on the dining-room carpet, to all appearance dead; and Mr. Glenn descended.

'Anything up at your place?' asked a policeman, who had just come by on his beat.

'I should think there is,' returned Joseph. 'One of the gentlemen's been found dead.'

'Dead!' echoed the policeman. 'Which of them is it?' he asked, after a pause.

'Mr. Anthony.'

'Why, I saw him turn in here about half-after eleven,' observed the officer. 'He is in a fit, perhaps.'

'Why do you say that?' asked Joseph.

'Because he had been taking a drop too much. He could hardly walk. Somebody brought him as far as the gate.'

Mr. Glenn had hastened on. The policeman followed with Joseph. Followed, possibly, in the gratification of his curiosity; possibly that he deemed his services might be in some way required. When the two got into the dining-room, Mr. Glenn was kneeling down to examine Anthony, and sounds of distress came shrilly on their ears from a distance. They were caused by the hysterics of Mrs. Dare.

'Is he dead, sir?' asked the policeman, in a low tone.

'He has been dead these two or three hours,' was the reply of Mr. Glenn.

But it was no fit. It was not anything so innocent. Mr. Glenn found that the cause of death was a stab in the side. Death, he believed, must have been instantaneous; and the hemorrhage was chiefly inward. A few stains there were on the clothes outside; not much.

'What's this?' cried Mr. Glenn.

He was pulling at some large substance on which Anthony had fallen. It proved to be a cloak. Cyril—and some others present—recognised it for Herbert's cloak. Where was Herbert? In bed? Was it possible that he could sleep through the noise and confusion that the house was in?

'Can nothing be done?' asked Mr. Dare of the surgeon.

Mr. Glenn shook his head.

'He is stone dead, you see; dead, and nearly cold. He must have been dead more than two hours. I should say nearer three.'

From two to three hours! Then that would bring the time of his death to half-past eleven o'clock, or thereabouts, close upon the time that the policeman saw him returning home. Somebody turned to ask the policeman a question, but he had disappeared. Mr. Glenn went to see what he could do for Mrs. Dare, whose cries of distress had been painful to hear, and Mr. Dare drew Joseph aside. Somehow he felt that he *dared* not question him in the presence of witnesses; lest any condemnatory fact should transpire to bring the guilt home to his second son. In spite of the sight of Anthony lying dead before him, in spite of what he had heard of the quarrel, he could not bring his mind to believe that Herbert had been guilty of this most dastardly deed.

'What time did you let him in?' asked Mr. Dare, pointing to his ill-fated son.

Joseph answered by a sort of evasion.

'The policeman said it was about half-after eleven, sir.'

'And what time did Mr. Herbert come home?'

In point of fact, but for seeing the cloak where he did see it, Joseph would not have known whether Mr. Herbert was at home yet. He felt there was nothing for it but to tell the simple truth to Mr. Dare—that the gentlemen had been in the habit of letting themselves in at any hour they pleased, the dining-room window being left unfastened for them. Joseph made the admission, and Mr. Dare received it with anger.

'I did it by their orders, sir,' the man said, with deprecation. 'If you think it was wrong, perhaps you'll put things on a better footing for the future. But to wait up every night till it's pretty near time to rise again, is what I can't do, or anybody else. Flesh and blood is but mortal, sir, and could'nt stand it.'

'But you were not kept up like that?' cried Mr. Dare.

'Yes, sir, I was. If one of the gentlemen wasn't out, the other would be. I told them it was impossible I could be up nearly all night and every night, and rise in the morning just the same, and do my work in the day. So they took to have the dining-room window left open, and came in that way, and I went to rest at my proper hour. Mr. Cyril and Mr. George, too, they are taking to stay out.'

'The house might have been robbed over and over again,' exclaimed Mr. Dare.

'I told them so, sir; but they laughed at me. They said who'd be likely to come through the grounds, and up to the windows and try them? At any rate, sir,' added Joseph, as a final excuse, 'they *ordered* it done. And that's how it is, sir, that I don't know what time either Mr. Anthony or Mr. Herbert came in last night.'

Mr. Dare said no more. The fruits of the mode in which his sons had been reared were coming heavily home to him. He turned to go up stairs, to the chamber of Herbert. On the bottom stairs, swaying herself to and fro in her *peignoir*, a staring print, all the colours of the rainbow, sat the governess. She lifted her white face as Mr. Dare approached.

'Is he dead?'

Mr. Dare shook his head.

'The surgeon says he has been dead ever since the beginning of the night.'

'And Monsieur Herbert—is *he* dead?'

'*He* dead!' repeated Mr. Dare, in an accent of alarm, fearing possibly, she might have a motive for the question. 'What should bring him also dead? Mademoiselle, why do you ask it?'

'Eh, me, I don't know,' she answered. 'I am bewildered with it all. Why should he be dead, and not the other? Why should either be dead?'

Mr. Dare saw that she did look bewildered, scarcely in her senses. She had a thick white handkerchief in her hand, and was wiping the moisture from her scarcely less white face.

'Did you witness the quarrel between them?' he inquired, supposing that she had done so, by her words.

'If I did, I not tell,' she vehemently answered, her English less clear than usual. 'If Joseph say—I hear him say it to you just now—that Monsieur Herbert took a knife to his brother, I not give testimony to it. What affair is it of mine, that I should tell against one or the other? Who did it—who killed him?' she rapidly continued. 'It was not Monsieur Herbert. No—I will say always that it was not Monsieur Herbert. He would not kill his brother.'

'I do not think he would,' earnestly spoke Mr. Dare.

'No, no, no!' said mademoiselle, her voice rising with her emphasis. 'He never kill his brother; he not enough *mechant* for that.'

'Perhaps he is not come in?' cried Mr. Dare, catching at the thought.

Betsy Carter answered the words. She had stolen up in the general restlessness, and halted there.

'He must be come in, sir,' she said; 'else how could his cloak be in the dining-room? They are saying that it's Mr. Herbert's cloak which was under Mr. Anthony.'

'What has Mr. Herbert's cloak to do with his coming in or not coming in?' sharply asked Mr. Dare. 'He would not be wearing his cloak this weather.'

'But he does wear it, sir,' returned Betsy. 'He went out in it to-night.'

'Did you see him?' sternly asked Mr. Dare.

'If I hadn't seen him, I couldn't have told that he went out in it,' independently replied Betsy, who, like her mother, was fond of maintaining her own opinion. 'I was looking out of the window in Miss Adelaide's room, and I saw Mr. Herbert go out by way of the dining-room window towards the entrance gate.'

'Wearing his cloak?'

'Wearing his cloak,' assented Betsy. 'I hoped he was hot enough in it.'

The words seemed to carry terrible conviction to the mind of Mr. Dare. Unwilling to believe the girl, he sought Joseph, and asked him.

'Yes, for certain,' Joseph answered. 'Mr. Herbert, as he was coming down stairs to go out, stopped to speak to me, sir, and he was fastening his cloak on then.'

Minny ran up, nearly bursting with grief and terror, as she laid hold of Mr. Dare. 'Papa! papa! is it true?' she sobbed.

'Is what true, child?'

'That it was Herbert? They are saying so.'

'Hush!' said Mr Dare. Carrying a candle, he went up to Herbert's room, his heart aching. That Herbert could sleep through the noise was surprising; and yet, not much so. His room was more remote from the house than were the rest, and looked to the back. But, had he slept through it? When Mr. Dare went in, he was sitting up in bed, awaking, or pretending to awake, from sleep then. The window, thrown wide open, may have contributed to deaden any sound in the house. 'Can you sleep through this, Herbert?' cried Mr. Dare.

Herbert stared, and rubbed his eyes, and stared again, something like one in a maze. 'Is that you, father?' he presently cried. 'What is it?'

'Herbert,' said his father, in a low tone of pain, of dread, 'what have you been doing to your brother?'

Herbert, as if not understanding the drift of the question, stared more than ever. 'I have done nothing to him,' he presently said. 'Do you mean Anthony?'

'Anthony is lying on the dining-room floor, killed—murdered. Herbert, *who did it?*'

Herbert Dare sat motionless in bed, looking utterly bewildered. That he could not understand, or was affecting not to understand, was evident. 'Anthony is—what do you say, sir!'

'He is dead; he is *murdered*,' replied Mr. Dare. 'Oh, my son, my son, say you did not do it! for the love of heaven, say you did not do it!' And the unhappy father burst into tears, and sunk down on the bed, utterly unmanned.

CHAPTER XI.

ACCUSED.

The grey dawn of the early May morning was breaking over the world—over the group gathered in the dining-room of Mr. Dare. That gentleman, his surviving sons, a stranger, a policeman or two, and Sergeant Delves, who had been summoned to the scene. Sundry of the household were going in and out, of their own restless, curious accord, or by summons. The sergeant was making inquiries into the facts and details of the evening.

Anthony Dare—as may be remembered—had retired to his room in a sort of sullen spirit, refusing to go out, when the message came to him from Lord Hawkesley. It appeared, by what was afterwards learnt, that he, Anthony Dare, had made an appointment to meet Lord Hawkesley and some other gentlemen at the Star-and-Garter hotel, where the viscount was staying—the proposed amusement of the evening being cards. Anthony Dare remained in his chamber solacing his chafed temper with brandy-and-water, until the waiter from the Star-and-Garter appeared a second time, bearing a note. The note Sergeant Delves had found in one of the pockets, and had it now open before him. It ran as follows:—

'Dear Dare—We are all here waiting, and can't make up the tables without you. What do you mean by shirking us? Come along, and don't be a month over it. Yours,

'Hawkesley.'

This note had prevailed. Anthony, possibly repenting of the solitary evening to which he had condemned himself, put on his boots again, and went forth: not—it is not pleasant to have to record it, but it cannot be concealed—not sober. He had taken ale with his dinner, he had taken wine after it, he had taken brandy-and-water in his room; and the three combined had told upon him. On his arrival at the Star-and-Garter, he found six or seven gentlemen assembled; but, instead of sitting down there in Lord Hawkesley's room, it was suddenly decided to adjourn to the lodgings of a Mr. Brittle, hard by; a young Oxonian, who had been plucked in his Little Go, and was supposed to be reading hard to avoid a second similar catastrophe. They went to Mr. Brittle's and sat down to cards, over which brandy-and-water and other drinks were introduced. Anthony Dare, by way of quenching his thirst, did not spare them, and was not particular as to the sorts. The consequence was, that he soon became most disagreeable company, snarling with all around; and, in short, unfit for play. This *contretemps* put the rest of the party out of sorts, and they broke up; but for that, they might probably have sat on till morning light, and that poor unhappy life been spared. There was no knowing what might have been. Anthony Dare was in no fit state for walking alone, and one of them, Mr. Brittle, undertook to see him home. Mr. Brittle quitted him at the gate, and Anthony Dare stumbled over the lawn and gained the house. After that, nothing farther was known. So far as this would not have been known, but that, in hastening for Delves, the policeman had come across Mr. Brittle. It was only natural that the latter, shocked and startled, should bend his steps to the scene; and from him they gathered the account of Anthony's movements abroad.

But now came the difficulty. Who had let Anthony in? Nobody. There was little doubt that he had made his own way in through the dining-room window. Joseph had turned the key of the front door at eleven o'clock, and he had not been called upon to open it until the return of Mr. and Mrs. Dare. The policeman who happened to be passing when Anthony came home—or it may be more correct to say, was brought home—testified to the probable fact that he had entered by means of the dining-room window. The man had watched him; had seen that, instead of making for the front door, which faced the road and was in view, he had stumbled across the grass, and disappeared down by the side of the house. On this side the dining-room window was situated; therefore it was but reasonable to suppose that Anthony had so entered.

'Had you any motive in watching him?' asked Sergeant Delves of this man.

'Nothing particular, except to see that he did not fall,' was the reply. 'When the gentleman who brought him home loosed his arm, he told him, in a joking way, not to get kissing the ground as he went in; and I thought I'd watch him, that I might go to his assistance if he did fall. He could hardly walk; he pitched about with every step.'

'Did he fall?'

'No; he managed to keep up. But I should think he was a good five minutes getting over the grass plat.'

'Did the gentleman remain to watch him?'

'No, not for above a minute. He just waited to see that he got safe over the gravel path on to the grass, and then he went back.'

'Did you see anybody else come in? About that time?—or before it?—or after it?

The man shook his head. 'I didn't see nobody else at all. I shut the gate after Mr. Anthony, and I didn't see it opened again. Not but what plenty might have opened and shut it again, and gone in, too, when I was higher up upon my beat.'

Sergeant Delves called Joseph. 'It appears uncommon odd that you should have heard no noise whatever,' he observed. 'A man's movements are not generally very quank when in the state described as being that of young Mr Dare. The probability is, that he would enter the dining-room noisily. He'd be nearly sure to fall again the furniture, being in the dark.'

'It's certain that I never did hear him ' replied Joseph. 'We was shut up in the kitchen. and I was mostly nodding asleep from the time I locked up at eleven till master came home at two. The two girls were chattering loud enough; they was at the table, a-making up caps, or something of that. The cook, she went to bed at ten; she was tired.'

'Then, with the exception of you three, all the household were in bed?'

'All of 'em—as was at home,' answered Joseph. 'The governess had gone early, the two young ladies went about ten, Mr. Cyril and Mr. George they went soon after ten. They came home from cricket "dead beat," they said, had some supper, and went to bed soon after it.'

'It's not usual for them—the young men, I mean—to go to bed so early, is it?' asked Sergeant Delves.

'No, it isn't, except on cricket nights,' answered Joseph. 'After cricket they generally come home and have supper, and don't go out again. Other nights they are mostly sure to be out late.'

'And you did not hear Mr. Herbert come in?'

'Sergeant Delves, I say that I never heard nothing nor nobody from the time I locked the front door till master and missis came home,' reiterated Joseph. 'Let me repeat it ten times over, I couldn't say it no plainer. If I had heard either of the gentlemen come in, I should have gone to 'em to see if anything was wanted. Specially to Mr. Anthony, knowing that he was not sober when he went out.'

Two points appeared more particularly to strike on the mind of Sergeant Delves. The one was. that no noise should have been heard; that a deed like this could have been committed in, as it appeared, absolute silence. The other was, that the dining-room window should have been found fastened inside. The latter fact was confirmatory of the strong suspicion that the offender was an inmate of the house. A person, not an inmate of the house, would naturally have escaped by the open dining-room window; but, to do this, *and* to fasten it inside after him, was an impossibility. Every other window in the house, every door, had been securely fastened; some in the earlier part of the evening, some at eleven o'clock by Joseph. Herbert Dare voluntarily acknowledged that it was he who had fastened the dining room window. His own account was—and the sergeant looked at him most narrowly while he gave it—that he had returned home late, getting on for two o'clock; that he had come in through the dining-room, and had put down the fastening of the window. He declared that he had not seen Anthony; that if Anthony had been lying there, as he was afterwards found, he, Herbert, had not observed him. But, he said, so far as he remembered, he never glanced to that part of the room at all, but had gone on through the room on the other side of the large dining-table; between the table and the fireplace. And, if he had glanced to it, he could have seen nothing, for the room was dark. He had no light, and had to feel his way.

'Was it usual for the young gentlemen to fasten the bolt of the window?' Sergeant Delves asked of Joseph. And Joseph replied that they sometimes did, sometimes not. If by any chance Mr. Anthony and Mr. Herbert came in together, then they would fasten it; or if, when the one came in, he knew that the other was not out, he would equally fasten it. Mr. Cyril and Mr. George did not come in often by that way; in fact, they were not out so late, generally speaking, as were their brothers.'

'Precisely so.' Herbert assented, with reference to the fastening. He had fastened it, believing his brother Anthony to be at home and in bed. When he went out the previous evening, Anthony had already gone to his room, expressing his intention not to quit it again that night.

Sergeant Delves inquired—no doubt for reasons of his own—whether this expressed intention on the part of Anthony could be testified to by anybody besides Herbert. Yes. By Joseph, by the governess, by Rosa and Minny Dare; all four had heard him say it. The sergeant would not trouble the young ladies, but requested to speak to the governess.

The governess was indignant at the request being made. She was in and out amongst them with her white face, in her many-coloured peignoir. She had been up-stairs and partially dressed herself; had discarded the borderless calico night-cap and done her hair, and put on the peignoir again, and come down to see and to listen. But she did not like being questioned.

'I know nothing about it,' she said to the sergeant, in answer, speaking vehemently. 'What should I know about it? I will tell you nothing. I went to bed before it was well nine o'clock; I had the headache, and I never heard anything more till the commotion. Why you ask me?'

'But you can surely tell, ma'am, whether or not you heard Mr. Anthony say he was going to his chamber for the night:' remonstrated the sergeant.

'Yes, he did say it,' she answered, so vehemently as to impart a shrieking sound to her voice. 'He said it in the salon. He kicked off his boots, and told Joseph to bring his slippers, and to take brandy-and-water to his room, for he should not leave it again that night. I never thought or knew that he had left it, until I saw him lying in the dining-salle, and they said he was dead.'

'Was Mr. Herbert present when he said he should go to his room for the night?'

'He was present, I think; I think he had come in then to the salon. That is all I know. I made the tea, and then my head got bad, and I went to bed. I can tell you nothing further.'

'Did you hear any noise in the house, ma'am?'

'No. If there was any noise I did not notice it. I soon went to sleep Where is the use of your asking me these things? You should ask those who sat up. I shall be sick if you make me talk about it. Nothing of this ever arrived in any family where I have served before.'

The sergeant allowed her to retire. She went to the stairs and sat down on the lower step, and leaned her cheek upon her hand, all she had done previously. Mr. Dare asked her why she did not go up stairs, away from the confusion and bustle of the sad scene; but she shook her head She did not care to be in her chamber alone, she answered, and her pupils were shut in with Madame Dare and Mademoiselle Adelaide.

It is possible that one thing puzzled the sergeant; though what puzzled him and what did not puzzle him had to be left to conjecture, for he gave no clue. No weapon had been found. The policemen had been searching thoroughly the room, partially the house; but had come upon no instrument likely to have inflicted the wound. A carving-knife or common table-knife had been suggested, remembering the previous occurrences of the evening; but Mr. Glenn's decided opinion was, that it must have been a very different instrument; some slender, sharp-pointed, two-edged blade, he thought, about six inches in length.

The most suspicious evidence, referring to Herbert, was the cloak. The sergeant had examined it curiously, with drawn-in lips. Herbert disposed of this, so far as he was concerned—that is, if he was to be believed. He said that he had put his cloak on, had gone out in it as far as the entrance gate; but finding it warmer than was agreeable, he had turned back, and flung it on the dining-room table, going in, as he had come out, through the window. He added, as a little bit of confirmatory testimony, that he remembered seeing the cloak begin to slide off the table again; that he saw it must fall to the ground; but being in a hurry, he would not stop to prevent it, or to place it better.

The sergeant seemed never to take his eyes from their sidelong glance at Herbert Dare. He had gone to work in his own way; hearing the different accounts and conjectures, sifting this bit of evidence, turning about that, holding a whispered colloquy with the man who had been sent to examine Herbert's room: holding a longer whispered colloquy with Herbert himself. On the departure of the surgeon and Mr. Brittle, who had gone away together, he had marched to the front and side doors of the house, locked them, and put the keys in his pocket. 'Nobody goes out of this here without my permission,' quoth he.

Then he took Mr. Dare aside. 'There's no mistake about this, I fear,' said he, gravely.

Mr. Dare knew what he meant. He himself was growing grievously faint-hearted. But he would not say it; he would not let it be seen that he cast, or could cast, a suspicion to Herbert. 'It appears to me that—that—if poor Anthony was in the state they describe, that he may have sat down or lain down after entering the dining-room, and dropped asleep,' observed Mr. Dare. 'Easy, then—the window being left open—for some evil midnight housebreaker from the street to have come in and attacked him.'

'Pooh!' said Sergeant Delves. 'It is no midnight housebreaker that has done this. We have a difficult line of duty to perform at times, us police; and all we can do to soften matters, is to go

to work as genteelly as is consistent with the law. I'm sorry to have to say it, Mr. Dare, but I have felt obligated to order my men to keep a look-out on Mr. Herbert.'

A cold chill ran through Mr. Dare. 'It could not have been Herbert!' he rejoined, his tone one of wailing pain, almost of entreaty. 'Mr. Glenn says it could not have been done later than half-past eleven, or thereabouts. Herbert never came home until near two.'

'Who is to prove that he was not at home till near two?'

'He says he was not. I have no doubt it can be proved. And poor Anthony was dead more than two hours before.'

'Now look you here,' cried Sergeant Delves, falling back on a favourite phrase of his. 'Mr. Glenn is correct enough as to the time of the occurrence; I have had some experience in death myself, and I'm sure he is not far out. But let that pass. Here are witnesses who saw him alive at half-past eleven o'clock, and you come home at two and find him dead. Now let your son Herbert just state where he was from half-past eleven till two. He says he was out; not near home at all. Very good. Only let him mention the place, so that we can verify it, and find, beyond dispute, that he *was* out, and the suspicion against him will be at an end. But he won't do this.'

'Not do it?' echoed Mr. Dare.

'He tells me, point blank, that he can't and he won't. I asked him.'

Mr. Dare turned impetuously to the room where he had left his second son—his eldest son now. 'Here, Herbert'—he was beginning. But the officer cut short the words by drawing him back.

'Don't go and make matters worse,' whispered he; 'perhaps they'll be bad enough without it. Now, Lawyer Dare, you'll not turn obstinate, for I am giving you a bit of friendly advice. You and I have had many a transaction together, and I don't mind going a bit out of my way for you, as I wouldn't do for other people. The worst thing your son could do, would be to say before them chattering servants that he can't or won't tell where he has been all night, or half the night. It would be self condemnation at once. Ask him in private, if you must ask him.'

Mr. Dare called his son to him, and Herbert answered to it. A policeman was sauntering after him, but the sergeant gave him a nod, and the man went back.

'Herbert, you say you did not come in until near two this morning?'

'Neither did I. It wanted about twenty minutes to it. The churches struck half-past one as I came through the town.'

'Where did you stay?'

'Well—I can't say,' replied Herbert.

Mr Dare grew agitated. 'You must say, Herbert,' he hoarsely whispered, 'or take the consequences.'

'I can't help the consequences,' was Herbert's answer. 'Where I was last night is no matter to anybody, and I shall not say.'

'Your not saying—if you can say—is just folly,' interposed the sergeant. 'It's the first question the magistrates will ask when you are placed before them.'

Herbert looked up angrily. 'Place me before the magistrates!' he echoed. 'What do you mean? You will not dare to take me into custody!'

'You have been in custody this half hour,' coolly returned the sergeant.

Herbert looked terribly fierce. 'I will not submit to this indignity,' he exclaimed. 'I *will not*. Sergeant Delves, you are overstepping—'

'Look here,' interrupted the sergeant, drawing something from some part of his clothes; and Mr. Herbert, to his dismay, caught sight of a pair of handcuffs. 'Don't you force me to use them,' said the officer. 'You are in custody, and must go before the magistrates; but now, you be a gentleman, and I'll use you as one.'

'I protest upon my honour that I have had neither act nor part in this crime!' cried Herbert, in agitation. 'Do you think I would stain my hand with the sin of Cain?'

'What is that on your hand?' asked the sergeant, bending forward to look more closely at Herbert's fingers.

Herbert held them out, openly enough. 'I was doing something last night which tore my fingers,' he said. 'I was trying to undo the fastenings of some wire. Sergeant Delves, I declare to you solemnly, that from the moment when my brother went to his chamber, as witnesses have stated to you, I never saw him, until my father brought me down from my bed to see him lying dead.'

'You drew a knife on him not many hours before, you know, Mr. Herbert.'

'It was done in the heat of passion. He provoked me very much; but I should not have used it. No, poor fellow! I should never have injured him.'

'Well, you only make your tale good to the magistrates,' was all the answer of the Sergeant. 'It'll be their affair as soon as you are afore 'em—not mine.'

Herbert Dare was handed back to the policeman; and as soon as the justice-room opened,

was conveyed before the magistrates—all, as the sergeant termed it—in a genteel, gentlemanly sort of way. He was charged with the murder of his brother Anthony.

To describe the commotion that overspread Helstonleigh would be beyond any pen. The college boys were in a strange state of excitement; both Anthony and Herbert Dare had been college boys themselves not so very long ago. Gar Halliburton—who was no longer a college boy, but a supernumerary—went home full of it. Having imparted it there, he thought he could not do better than go in and regale Patience with the news, by way of *divertissement* to her sick bed.

'May I come up, Patience?' he called out from the foot of the stairs. 'I have got something to tell you.'

Receiving permission, up he flew. Patience, partially raised, was sewing with her hands, which she could contrive to do. Anna sat by the window, putting the buttons on some new shirts.

'I have finished two,' cried she, turning round to Gar in great glee. 'And my father's coming home next week, he writes us word. Perhaps thy mother has had a letter from William. Look at the shirts!' she continued, exhibiting them.

'Never mind bothering about shirts now, Anna,' returned Gar, losing sight of his gallantry in his excitement. 'Patience, the most dreadful thing has happened. Anthony Dare's murdered!'

Patience, calm Patience, only looked at Gar. Perhaps she did not believe it. Anna's hands, holding out the shirts, were arrested mid way; her mouth and blue eyes alike opening.

'He was murdered in their dining-room in the night,' went on Gar, intent only on his tale. 'The town is all up in arms; you never saw such an uproar. When we came out of school just now, we thought the French must have come to invade us, by the crowds there were in the street. You couldn't get near the Guildhall, where the examination was going on. Not more than half a dozen of us were able to fight our way in. Herbert Dare looked so pale; he was standing there, guarded by three policemen——'

'Thee hast a fast tongue, Gar, interrupted Patience. 'Dost thee mean to say Herbert Dare was in custody?'

'Of course he was,' replied Gar, faster than before. 'It is he who has done it. At least he is accused of it. He and Anthony had a quarrel yesterday, and it came to knives. They were parted then; but he is supposed to have laid wait for Anthony in the night and killed him.'

'Is Anthony dead? Is he——Anna! what hast thee?'

Anna had dropped the shirts and the buttons. Her blue eyes had closed, her lips and cheeks had grown white, her hands fell powerless.

'She is fainting!' shouted Gar, as he ran to support her.

'Gar, dear,' said Patience, 'thee should not tell ill news quite so abruptly. Thee hast made me feel queer Can thee stretch thy hand out to the bell? It will bring up Hester.'

CHAPTER XII.

COMMITTED FOR TRIAL.

Helstonleigh could not recover its equanimity. Never had it been so rudely shaken. Incidents there had been as startling; crimes of as deep a dye; but, taking it with all its attendant circumstances, no occurrence, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, had excited the interest that was attaching to the death and assumed murder of Anthony Dare.

The station in life of the parties, above that in which such unhappy incidents are more generally found; the conspicuous position they occupied in the town; and the very uncertainty—the mystery, it may be said—in which the affair was wrapped, wrought local curiosity to the highest pitch.

Scarcely a shadow of doubt rested on the public mind that the deed had been done by Herbert Dare. The police force, actively engaged in searching out all the details, held the same opinion. In one sense this was, perhaps, unfortunate; for when strong suspicion, whether of the police or of the public, is especially directed to one isolated point, it inevitably tends to keep down doubts that might arise in regard to other quarters.

It seemed scarcely possible to hope that Herbert was not guilty. All the facts tended to the assumption that he was so. There was the ill-feeling known to have existed between himself and his brother; the quarrel and violence in the dining-room not many hours before, in which quarrel Herbert had raised a knife upon him. 'But for the opportune entrance of the servant Joseph,' said the people one to another, 'the murder might have been done then.' Joseph had stopped ill consequences at the time, but he had not stopped the mouth of Herbert—the threat he had uttered in his passion—still to be revenged,

Terribly those words told now against Herbert Dare.

Another thing that told against him, and in a most forcible manner, was the cloak. That he had put it on to go out; nay, had been seen to go out in it by the housemaid, was indisputable; and his brother was found lying on this very cloak. In vain Herbert protested, when before the magistrates and at the coroner's inquest, that he returned before leaving the garden gates, and had flung this cloak into the dining-room, finding it too hot that evening to wear. He obtained no credit. He had not been seen to do this; and the word of an accused man goes for little. All ominous, these things—all telling against him, but nothing, taking them collectively, as compared with his refusal to state where he was that night. He left the house between eight and nine, close upon nine, he thought; he was not sure of the exact time to a quarter of an hour; and he never returned to it until nearly two. Such was his account. But where he had been in the interim, he positively refused to state.

It was only his assertion, you see, against the broad basis of suspicion. Anthony Dare's death must have taken place, as testified to by Mr. Glenn, somewhere about half-past eleven; who was to prove that Herbert at that time was not at home?

'I was not,' Herbert reiterated, when before the coroner. 'I did not get home till between half-past one and two. The churches struck the half hour as I was coming through the town, and it would take me afterwards some ten minutes to get home. It must have wanted about twenty minutes to two when I entered.'

'But where were you? Where had you been? Where did you come from?' he was asked.

'That I cannot state,' he replied. 'I was out upon a little business of my own; business that concerns nobody; and I decline to make it public.'

On that score nothing more could be got from him. The coroner drew his own conclusions; the jury drew theirs, the police had already drawn them, and very positive ones.

These were the two facts that excited the ire of Sergeant Delves and his official colleagues with all their searching, they could find no weapon likely to have been the one used; and they could not discover where Herbert Dare had gone that evening. It happened that nobody remembered to have seen him passing in the town early or late, or, if they had seen him, it had made no impression on their memory. The appearance of Mr. Dare's sons was so common an occurrence that no especial note was likely to have been taken of it. Herbert declared that in passing through West Street, Turtle, the auctioneer, was leaning out at his open bed-room window, and that he, Herbert, had called out to him, and asked whether he was star-gazing. Mr. Turtle, when applied to, could not corroborate this. He believed that he had been looking out at his window that night; he believed that it might have been about the hour named, getting on for two, for he was late going to bed, having been to a supper party; but he had no recollection whatever of seeing Mr. Herbert pass, or of having been spoken to by him, or by anybody else. When pressed upon the point, Mr. Turtle acknowledged that his intellects might not have been in the clearest state of perception, the supper party having been a jovial one.

One of the jury remarked that it was very singular the prisoner could go through the dining-room, and not observe his brother lying in it. The prisoner replied that it was not singular at all. The room was in darkness, and he had felt his way through it on the opposite side of the table to that where his brother was afterwards found. He had gone straight through, and up to his chamber, as quietly as possible, not to disturb the house; and he dropped asleep as soon as he was in bed.

The verdict returned was 'Wilful murder against Herbert Dare;' and he was committed to the county goal to take his trial at the assizes. Mr. Dare's house was beyond the precincts of the city. Sergeant Delves and his men renewed their inquiries; but they could discover no trace, either of the weapon, or of where Herbert Dare had passed the suspicious hours. The sergeant was vexed; but he would not allow that he was beaten.

'Only give us time,' said he, with a characteristic nod. 'The Pyramids of Egypt warn't built up but stone by stone.'

Tuesday morning—the morning fixed for the funeral of Anthony Daro. The curious portion of Helstonleigh wended its way up to the churchyard; as it is the delight of the curious portion of a town to do. What a sad sight it was! That dark object, covered by its pall, carried by the attendants, followed by the mourners—Mr. Dare, and his sons Cyril and George. He, the father, kept his face in his handkerchief, as he walked behind the coffin to the grave. Many a man in Helstonleigh enjoyed a higher share of esteem and respect than did Lawyer Dare; but not one present, in that crowded churchyard, but felt for him in his bitter grief. Not one, let us hope, but felt to his heart's core the fate of the unhappy Anthony, now, for weal or for woe, to answer before his Maker for his life on earth. That same day, Tuesday, witnessed the return of Samuel

Lynn and William Halliburton. They arrived in the evening, and of course the first news they were greeted with was the all-prevailing topic. Few things caused the ever-composed Quaker to betray much surprise; but William was half-stunned with the news. Anthony Dare dead—murdered—buried that very day; and Herbert in prison, awaiting his trial for the offence! To William the whole affair seemed more incredible than real.

'Sir,' he said to his master, when, the morning following they were alone together in the counting-house at the manufactory, 'do you believe Herbert Dare can be guilty?'

Mr. Ashley had been gazing at William, lost in thought. The change which we are apt to see or fancy we see, in a near friend, after a few weeks' absence, was visibly apparent in William He had improved in looks; and yet those looks, with their true nobility, both of form and intellect, had been scarcely capable of improvement Nevertheless, it was there, and Mr. Ashley had been struck with it.

'I cannot say,' he replied, aroused by the question. 'The facts appear most conclusive against him; but it appears incredible that he should so have lost himself. To be suspected and committed on such a charge is grief enough, without the reality of the guilt.'

'So it is,' acquiesced William.

'We feel the disgrace very keenly—as all must who are connected with the Dares in ever so remote a degree. *I* feel it, William: feel it as a blow. Mrs. Ashley being the cousin of Anthony Dare.'

'They are relatives of ours, also;' said William in a low tone. 'My father was the first cousin of Mrs. Dare.'

Mr. Ashley looked at him with surprise. 'Your father the first cousin of Mrs. Dare!' he repeated 'What are you saying?'

'Her first cousin, sir. You have heard of old Mr. Cooper, of Birmingham?'

'From whom the Dares inherited their money Well?'

Mr. Cooper had a brother and a sister. Mrs Dare was the daughter of the brother; the sister married the Reverend William Halliburton, and my father was their son. Mrs. Dare, as Julia Cooper, and my father, Edgar Halliburton, both resided together for some time under their uncle's roof at Birmingham.'

A moment's pause, and then Mr. Ashley laid his hand on William's shoulder. 'Then this brings a sort of relationship between us, William. I shall have a right to feel pride in you now.'

William laughed. But his cheek flushed with the pleasure of a more earnest feeling. His greatest earthly wish was to be appreciated by Mr. Ashley.

'How is it I never heard of this relationship before?' cried Mr. Ashley. 'Was it purposely concealed?'

'It is only within a year or two that I have known of it,' replied William. 'Frank and Gar are not aware of it yet. When we first came to Helstonleigh, the Dares were much annoyed at it: and they made it known to my mother in so unmistakable a manner, that she resolved to drop all mention of the relationship; she would have dropped the relationship itself if she could. It was natural, perhaps, that they should feel annoyed,' continued William, seeking to apologise for them. 'They were rich and great in the eyes of the town; we were poor and obscure.'

Mr. Ashley was casting his recollections backwards. A certain event, which had always somewhat puzzled him, was becoming clear now. 'William, when Anthony Dare—acting, as he said, for me—put that seizure in your house for rent, it must have been done with the view of driving you from the town?'

'My mother says she has always thought so, sir.'

'I see; I see. Why, William, half the inheritance, enjoyed by the Dares, ought justly to have been your father's!'

'We shall do as well without it, in the long run, sir,' replied William, a bright smile illumining his face. 'Hard though the struggle was at the beginning!'

'Ay, that you will!' warmly returned Mr Ashley. 'The ways of Providence are wonderful! Yes, William—and I know you have been taught to think so—what men call the chances of the world, are all God's dealings. Reflect on the circumstances favouring the Dares; reflect on your drawbacks and impediments! They had wealth, position, a lucrative profession; everything, in fact, to aid them on, that can be desired by a family in the middle class of life; while you had poverty, obscurity, and toil to contend with. But now, look at what they are! Mr. Dare's money is dissipated; he is overwhelmed with embarrassment—I know it to be the fact, William; but this is for your ear alone. Folly, recklessness, irreligion reign in his house; his daughters are lost in pretentious vanity; his sons in something worse. In a few years they will have gone down—down. Yes,' added Mr. Ashley, pointing with his finger to the floor of his counting-house, 'down to the dogs. I can see it coming, as surely as that the sun is in the heavens. You and they will have exchanged positions, William; nay, you and yours, unless I am greatly mistaken, will be

in a far higher position than they have ever occupied; for you will have secured the favour of God, and the approbation of all good men.'

'That Frank and Gar will attain to a position in time, I should be worse than a heathen to doubt, looking back on the wonderful manner in which we have been helped on,' thoughtfully observed William. 'For myself I am not sanguine.'

'Do you never cherish dreams on your own account?' inquired Mr. Ashley.

'If I do, sir, they are vague ones. My position affords no scope for ambition.'

'I don't know that,' said Mr. Ashley. 'Would you not be satisfied to become one of the great manufacturers of this great city?' he continued, laughing.

'Not unless I could be one of the greatest. Such as——!' William stopped.

'Myself, for instance?' quietly put in Mr. Ashley.

'Yes, indeed,' answered William, lifting his earnest eyes to his master. 'Were it possible that I could ever attain to be as you are, sir, in all things—in character, in position, in the estimation of my fellow-citizens—it would be sufficient ambition for me, and I should sit down content.'

'Not you,' cried Mr. Ashley. 'You would then be casting your thoughts to the serving your said fellow-citizens in Parliament, or some such exalted vision. Man's nature is to soar, you know; it cannot rest. As soon as one object of ambition is attained, others are sought after.'

'So far as I go, we need dot discuss it,' was William's answer. 'There's no chance of my ever becoming even a second-rate manufacturer; let alone what you are, sir.'

'The next best thing to being myself, would perhaps be that of being my partner, William.'

The voice in which his master spoke was so significant, that William felt his face flush to crimson. Mr Ashley noticed it.

'Did that ambition ever occur to you?'

'No, sir, never. That honour is looked upon as being destined for Cyril Dare.'

'Indeed!' calmly repeated Mr. Ashley. 'If you could transform your nature into Cyril, I do not say but that it might be.'

'He expects it himself, sir.'

'Would he be a worthy associate for me, think you?' inquired Mr. Ashley, bending his gaze full on William.

William made no reply. Perhaps none was expected, for his master resumed—

'I do not recommend you to indulge that particular dream of ambition; I cannot see sufficiently far into the future. It is my intention to push you somewhat on in the world. I have no son to push,' he added, an expression of sadness crossing his face. 'All I can do for my boy is to leave him at ease after me. Therefore I may, if I live, push you in his stead. Provided, William, you continue to deserve it.'

A smile parted William's lips. That, he would ever strive for, heaven helping him.

Mr. Ashley again laid his hand on William, and gazed into his face. 'I have had such an account of you from Samuel Lynn. And it is not often the Friend launches into decided praise.'

'Oh, have you, sir?' returned William, with animation. 'I am glad he was pleased with me.'

'He was more than pleased. But I must not forget that I was charged with a message from Henry. He is outrageous at your not having gone to him last night. I shall be sending him to France one of these days, under your convoy, William. It may do him good, in more ways than one.'

'I will come to Henry this evening, sir. I must leave him, though, for half an hour, to get round to East's.'

'Your conscience is engaged, I see. You know what Henry accused you of, the last time you left him to go to East's?'

'Of being enamoured of Charlotte,' said William, laughing in answer to Mr Ashley's smile. 'I will come, at any rate, sir, and battle the other matter out with Henry.'

CHAPTER XIII.

A BRUISED HEART.

If it were a hopeless task attempting to describe the consternation of Helstonleigh at the death of Anthony Dare, far more difficult would it be to depicture that of Anna Lynn. Believe Herbert guilty, Anna did not; she could scarcely have believed that, had an angel come down from heaven to affirm it. Her state of mind was not to be envied; suspense, sorrow, anxiety filled it, causing her to be in a grievous state of restlessness. She had to conceal this from the eyes of Patience; from the eyes of all the world. For one thing, she could not get at the correct particulars; newspapers did not come in her way, and she shrunk, in her self-consciousness, from asking. Her whole being—if we may dare to say it here—was wrapt in Herbert Dare; father, friends, home, country; she could have sacrificed them all to save him. She would have laid down her life for his. Her good sense was distorted, her judgment warped, she saw passing events, not with the eyes of dispassionate fact, or with

any fact at all, but through the unhealthy tinge of fond, blind prejudice. The blow had nearly crushed her; the dread suspense was wearying her heart. She seemed no longer the same careless child as before; in a few hours she had overstepped the barrier of girlish timidity, and had gained the experience which is bought with sorrow.

On the evening mentioned in the last chapter, just before William went out to keep his appointment with Henry Ashley, he saw from the window Anna, in his mother's garden, bending over the flowers, and glancing at himself. Glancing, as it struck William, with a strangely wistful expression. He went out to her.

'Tending the flowers, Anna?'

She turned to him, her fair young face utterly colourless 'I have been so wanting to see thee William! I came here, hoping thee would come out. At dinner time I was here, and thee only nodded to me from the window. I did not like to beckon to thee.'

'I am sorry to have been so stupid, Anna. What is it?'

'Thee hast heard what has happened—that dreadful thing! Hast thee heard it all?'

'I believe so. All that is known.'

'I want thee to tell it me. Patience won't talk of it; Hester only shakes her head; and I am afraid to ask Gar. *Thee* tell it to me.'

'It would not do you good to know it, Anna,' he gravely said. 'Better try and not think——'

'William, hush thee!' she feverishly exclaimed 'Thee knew there was a —— a friendship between me and *him*. If I cannot learn all there is to be learnt, I shall die.'

William looked down at the changing cheek the eyes full of pain, the trembling hands, clasped in their eagerness It might be better to tell her than to leave her in this state of suspense.

William, there is nobody in the wide world that knows he cared for me, but thee,' she imploringly resumed. 'Thee must tell me; thee *must* tell me!'

'You mean that you want to hear the particulars of—of what took place on Thursday night.'

'Yes. All. Then and since. I have but heard snatches of the wicked tale.'

He obeyed her; telling her all the necessary facts, suppressing some few of the details. She leaned against the garden-gate, listening in silence, her face turned from him, looking through the wooden bars into the field.

'Why do they not believe him?' was her first comment, spoken sharply and abruptly. 'He says he was not near the house at the time the act must have been done: why do they not believe him?'

'It is easy to assert a thing, Anna. But the law requires proof.'

'Proof? That he must declare to them where he had been?'

'Undoubtedly. And corroborative proof must also be given.'

'But what sort of proof?' I do not understand their laws.'

'Suppose Herbert Dare asserted that he had spent those hours with me, for instance; then I must go forward on the trial and confirm his assertion. Also any other witnesses who may have seen him with me, if there were any. It would be establishing what is called an *alibi*.'

'And would they acquit him then? Suppose there were only one witness to speak for him? Would one be sufficient?'

'Certainly. Provided the witness were trustworthy.'

'If a witness went forward and declared it now, would they release him?'

'Impossible He is committed to take his trial at the assizes, and he cannot be released beforehand It is exceedingly unwise of him not to declare where he was that evening—if he can do so.'

'Where do the public think he was? What do they say?'

'I am afraid the public, Anna, mostly think that he was not out anywhere. At any rate, after eleven or half-past.'

'Then they are very cruel!' she exclaimed in a tone of passion. 'Do they *all* think that?'

'There may be a few who judge that it was as he says; that he was really away, and is, consequently, innocent.'

'And where do *they* think he was?' eagerly reiterated Anna again. 'Do they suspect any place where he might have been?'

William made no reply. It was not at all expedient to impart to her all the gossip or surmises of the town. But his silence seemed to agitate her worse than any reply could have done. She turned to him, shaking with emotion, the tears streaming down her face.

'Oh, William, tell me what is thought! Tell me, I implore thee! Thee cannot leave me in this trouble. Where is it thought he was?'

He took her hands; he bent over her as tenderly as any brother could have done; he read all too surely how opposite to the truth had been her former assertion to him—that she did not care for Herbert Dare.

'Anna, child, you must not agitate yourself in this way; there is no cause for it I assure you I do not know where it is thought Herbert Dare may have been that night; neither, so far as can be learnt, does anybody else know. It is the

chief point—where he was—that is puzzling the town.'

She laid her head down on the gate again, closing her eyes, as in very weariness. William's heart ached for her.

'He may not be guilty, Anna,' was all the consolation he could find to offer.

'*May* not be guilty!' she echoed, in a tone of pain. 'He is not guilty. William, I tell thee he is not. Dost thee think I would defend him if he could do so wicked a thing?'

He did not dispute the point with her; he did not tell her that her assumption of his innocence was inconsistent with facts. Presently Anna resumed.

'Why must he stop in goal till the trial? There was that man who stole the skins from Thomas Ashley—they let him out, when he was taken, until the sessions came on, and then he went up for trial.'

'That man was out on bail. But they do not take bail in cases so grave as this.'

'I may not stay longer. There's Hester coming to call me in. I rely upon thee to tell me anything fresh that may arise,' she said, lifting her beseeching eyes to his.

'One word, Anna, before you go. And yet I see how worse than useless it is to say it to you now. You must forget Herbert Dare.'

'I shall forget him, William, when I cease to have memory,' she whispered. 'Never before. Thee wilt keep my counsel?'

'Truly and faithfully.'

'Fare thee well, William; I have no friend but thee.'

She ran swiftly into their own premises. William turned to pursue his way to Mr. Ashley's, the thought of Henry Ashley's misplaced attachment lying on his mind like an incubus.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE DYING IN HONEY FAIR.

Mrs. Buffle stood in what she called her 'back'us,' practically superintending a periodical wash. The day was hot, and the steam was hot, and as Mrs. Buffle rubbed away, she began to think she should never be cool again.

'Missis,' shrieked out a young voice from the precincts of the shop, 'Ben Tyrrett's wife says will you let her have a gill o' vinegar? Be I to serve it?'

The words came from the small damsel who was had in to help on cleaning and washing days. Mrs. Buffle kept her hands still in the soapsuds, and projected her hot face over the tub to answer.

'Matty, tell Mary Ann Tyrrett as she promised faithful to bring me something off her score this week, but I've not seen the colour of it yet.'

'She says as it's to put to his head,' called back Matty, alluding to the present demand. 'He's bad a-bed, and have fainted right off.'

'Serve him right,' responded Mrs. Buffle. 'You may give her the vinegar, Matty. Tell her as it's a penny farthing. I heered he had been drinking again,' she added to herself and the washing-tub, 'and laid hisself down in the wet road the night afore last, and was found there in the morning.'

Later in the day it happened that William Halliburton was passing through Honey Fair, and met Charlotte East. She stopped him.

'Have you heard, sir, that Tyrrett is dying?' she asked.

'Tyrrett dying!' repeated William, in amazement. 'Who says he is?'

'The doctor says it, I believe, sir. I must say he looks like it. Mary Ann sent for me, and I have been down to see him.'

'Why, what can be the matter with him?' asked William; 'he was at work the day before yesterday.'

'He was at work, sir, but he could not speak, they tell me, for that illness that has been hanging about him so long, and settling on his chest. That night after leaving work, instead of going home and getting a basin of gruel, or something of that, he went to the Horned Ram, and drank there till he couldn't keep upon his legs.'

'With his chest in that state?'

'And that was not the worst,' resumed Charlotte. 'It had been a wet day, if you remember, sir, and he somehow strayed into Oxlip Lane, and fell down there, and lay till morning. What with the drink, and what with the exposure to the wet, his chest got dangerously inflamed, and now the doctor says he has not many hours to live.

'I am sorry to hear it,' cried William. 'Is he sensible?'

'Too sensible, sir, in one sense,' replied Charlotte. 'The remorse upon him is dreadful. He is saying that if he had not misspent his life, he might have died a good man, instead of a bad one.'

William passed on, much concerned at the news. His way led him past Ben Tyrrett's lodgings, and he turned in. Mary Ann was sobbing and wailing, in the midst of as many curious and condoling neighbours as the kitchen would contain. All were in full gossip—as might be expected. Mrs. Cross had taken home the three

little children, by way of keeping the place quiet; and the sick man was lying in the room above, surrounded by several of his fellow-workmen, who had heard of his critical state.

Some of the women sidled off when William entered, rather ashamed of being caught chattering vehemently. It was remarkable the deference that was paid him, and from no assumption of his own—indeed, the absence of assumption may have partially accounted for it. But, though ever courteous and pleasant with them all, he was a thorough gentleman; and the working class are keen distinguishers

'Why, Mrs Tyrrett, this is sad news,' he said. 'Is your husband so ill?'

'Oh, he must die, he must die, sir!' she answered, in a frantic tone. 'Uncomfortably as they had lived together, the man was still her husband, and there's no doubt she was feeling the present crisis; was shrinking with dread from the future. A widow with three young children, and the workhouse for an asylum! It was the prospect before her. 'He must die anyways; but he might have lasted a few hours longer, if I could have got what the doctor ordered.'

William did not understand.

'It was a blister and some physic, sir,' explained one of the women 'The doctor wrote it on a paper, and said it was to be took to the nearest druggist's. But when they got it there, Darwin said he couldn't trust the Tyrretts, and they must send the money if they wanted the things.'

'It was not Mr. Parry, then, who was called in?'

'It were a strange doctor, sir, as was fetched. There was Tyrrett's last bout of illness owing for to Mr. Parry, and so they didn't like to send for him. As to them druggists, they be some of 'em a cross-grained set, unless you goes with the money in your hand.'

William asked to see the prescription. It was produced, and he read its contents—which he was as capable of doing and understanding as the best physician in Helstonleigh. He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote a few words on it in pencil, folded it with the prescription, and desired one of the women to take it to the chemist's again. He then went up to the sick room.

Tyrrett was lying on a flock mattress, on an ugly bedstead of brown wood, the four posts sticking up naked. A blanket and a checked blue cotton quilt covered him. His breathing was terribly laboured, his face painfully anxious. William approached him, bending his head, that it might not strike against the ceiling.

'I'm a-going, sir!' cried the man, in a tone as anxious as his face; 'I'm a-going at last.'

'I hope not,' said William. 'I hope you will get better. You are to have a blister on your chest, and——'

'No he ain't, sir,' interrupted one of the men. 'Darwin won't send it.'

'Oh, yes he will, if he is properly asked. They are gone again to him. Are you in much pain, Tyrrett?'

'I'm in a agony of pain here, sir,' pointing to his chest. 'But that ain't nothing to my in'ard pain, my pain of mine. Oh, Mr. Halliburton, you're good, sir; you haven't got nothing to reproach yourself with; can't you do nothing for me? I'm a-going into the sight of my Maker; and he's angry with me!'

In truth, William knew not what to answer. Tyrrett's voice was as one wail of anguish; and his hands were stretched out beseechingly.

'Charlotte East were here just now, and she told me to go to Christ—that he were merciful and forgiving But how be I to go to him? If I try, sir, I can't, for there's my past life a-rising up afore me. I have been a bad man; I have never once in all my life tried to please God.'

The words echoed through the stillness of the room; echoed with a sound ominously awful. *Never once to have tried to please God!* Throughout a whole life, and throughout all its blessings!

'I have never thought of God,' he continued to reiterate 'I have never cared for Him, or tried to please Him, or done the least thing for Him. And now I'm a-going to face his wrath, and I can't help myself! Sam Little, wipe my brow, will ye?'

'You may be spared yet,' said William; 'you may, indeed. And your future life must atone for the past.'

'I shan't be spared, sir; I feel that the world's all up with me,' was the rejoinder. 'I'm a-going fast, and there's nobody to give me a word of comfort! Can't *you*, sir? I'm a-going away, and God's angry with me!'

William leaned over him. 'I can but say as Charlotte East did,' he whispered. 'Try and find your Saviour. There is mercy with him at the eleventh hour.'

'I have not got the time to find him,' breathed forth Tyrrett, in an agony. 'I might find him if I had the time give me; but I have not got it.'

William, shrinking in his youth and inexperience from the arguing of topics so momentous, was not equal to the emergency. Who was? He did what he could; and that was to despatch a message for a clergyman, who answered the summons with speed.

The blister also came, and the medicine that had been prescribed William went home, hoping all might prove as a healing balm to the sick man.

A fallacious hope. Tyrrett died the following morning. When William went round on his mission of inquiry, which he did early, he found him dead. Some of the men, whom he had seen with Tyrrett the previous night, were assembled in the kitchen.

'He is but just gone, sir,' they said. 'The women be up with him now. They have took his wife round a-schreeching to her mother's. He died with that there blister on his chest.'

'Did he die peacefully?' was William's question.

'Awful hard, sir, toward the last; a-moaning, and a-calling, and a-clenching of his hands in mortal pain. His sister, she come round—she's a hard one, is that Liza Tyrrett—and she set on at the wife, a-saying it was her fault that he'd took to go out a drinking. That there parson couldn't do nothing with him,' concluded the speaker, lowering his voice.

William's breath stood still. 'No!'

The man shook his head. 'Tyrrett weren't in a frame o' mind for it, sir. He kep' crying out as he had led a ill life, and never thought of God—and them was his last words. It ain't happy, sir to die like that. It have quite cowed down us as was with him: one gets a-thinking, sir, what sort of a place it may be, t'other side, where he's a gone to.'

William lifted his head, a sort of eager hope on his countenance, speaking cheerily. 'Could you not let poor Tyrrett's death act as a warning to you?'

There was a dead silence. Five men were present; every one of them leading careless lives. Somehow they they did not much like to hear of 'warning,' although the present moment was one of unusual seriousness

'Religion is so dreadful dull and gloomy, sir.'

'Religion dull and gloomy!' echoed William. 'Well, perhaps some people do make a gloomy affair of it; but then I don't think theirs can be the right religion. I do not believe people were sent into the world to be gloomy; time enough for that when troubles come.'

'What is religion?' asked one of the men.

'It is a sort of thing that's a great deal better to be felt than talked of,' answered William. 'I am no parson, and cannot pretend to enlighten you. We might never come to an understanding over it, were we to discuss it all day long. I would rather talk to you of life, and its practical duties.'

'Tyrrett said as he had never paid heed to any of his duties. It were his cry over and over again, sir, in the night. He said he had drunk, and swore, and beat his wife, and done just what he oughtn't to ha' done.'

'Ay, I do fear it was so,' replied William. 'Poor Tyrrett's existence was divided into three phases—working, drinking, quarrelling; dissatisfaction attending all. I fear a great many more in Honey Fair could say the same.'

The men's consciences were pricking them; some of them began to stand in an uncomfortable fashion on one leg. *They* tippled *they* quarrelled; they *had* been known to administer personal correction to their wives on provocation.

'Times upon times I asked Tyrrett to come round in an evening to Robert East's,' continued William. 'He never did come. But I can tell you this, my men; had he taken to pass his evenings there twelve months ago, when the society—as they call it—was first formed he might have been a hale man now, instead of lying there dead.'

'Do you mean as he'd have growed religious, sir?'

'I tell you we will put religion out of the discussion, as you don't seem to like the name. Had Tyrrett taken to like rational evenings, instead of public-houses, it would have made a wonderful difference in his mode of thought, and the difference in conduct would have followed. Look at his father in-law, Cross. He was living without hope or aim, at loggerheads with his wife and with the world, and rather given to wish himself dead. All that's over. Do you think I should like to go about with a dirty face and holes in my coat?'

The men laughed. They thought not.

'Cross used to. But you see nothing of that now. Many others used to. Many *do*.'

Rather conscience-stricken again, the men tried to hide their elbows. 'It's true enough,' said one. 'Cross, and some more of 'em, be a-getting smart.'

'Smart inside as well as out,' said William. 'They are acquiring self-respect; one of the best qualities a man can find. They'd not be seen in the street now in rags, or the worse for drink, or in any other degrading position; no, not if you bribed them with gold. The coming round to East's has done that for them. They are beginning to see that it's just as well to lead pleasant lives here, as unpleasant ones. In a short while Cross will be gathering furniture about him again, towards setting up the home he lost. He—and many more—will also, as I truly believe, be beginning to set up furniture of another sort.'

'What sort's that, sir?'

'The furniture that will stand him in need for the next life; the life that Tyrrett has now entered upon,' replied William, in a deeper tone. 'It is a life that *must* come, you know; our little span of time here, in comparison with eternity, is but as a tea-cup of water to the great river that

runs through the town; and it is as well to be prepared for it. Now, the next five I am going to get round to Easts's, are you.'

'Us, sir?'

'Every one of you: although I believe you have been in the habit of complimenting your friends, who go there, with the title of 'milksops.' I want to take you this evening. If you don't like it, you know you need not repeat the visit. You will come to oblige me, won't you?'

They said they would. And William went out satisfied, though he hardly knew how Robert East would manage to stow the new comers. Not many steps from the door he encountered Mrs. Buffle. She stopped him to talk of Tyrrett.

'Better that he had spent his loose time at East's, nor at the publics,' remarked that lady.

'It is the very thing we have been saying,' answered William. 'I wish we could get all Honey Fair there; though, indeed, there's no room for more than we have now. I cast a longing eye sometimes to that building at the back, which they say was built for a Mormon stronghold, and has never been fitted up, owing to a dispute among themselves about the number of wives each elder might appropriate to his own share.'

'Disgraceful, greedy pollagists!' struck in Mrs Buffle, apostrophising the Mormon elders. 'One husband is enough to have at one's fireside, goodness knows, without being worried with 'em unlimited.'

'That is not the question,' said William, laughing. 'It is, how many wives are enough. However, I wish we could get the building. East will have to hold the gathering in his garden soon.'

'There's no denying that it have worked good in Honey Fair,' acknowledged Mrs. Buffle. 'It isn't alone the men that have growed more respectable, them as have took to go, but their wives too. You see, sir, in sitting at the public-houses, it wasn't only that they drank themselves quarrelsome, but they spent their money. Now their tempers is saved, and their money's saved. The wives, they see the benefit, and in course they try to be better behaved theirselves. Not but what there's plenty of room for improvement still,' added Mrs. Buffle, in a tone of patronage.

'It will come in time,' said William. 'What we must do now, is to look out for a larger room.'

'One with a chimbley in it, as 'll draw?' suggested Mrs. Buffle.

'Oh, yes. What would they do without fire on a winter's night? The great point is, to have things thoroughly comfortable.'

'If it hadn't been for the chimbley, I might have offered our big garret, sir. But it's the crankiest thing ever built, is that chimbley; the minute a handful of fire's lighted, the smoke puffs it out again. And then again—there'd be the passing through the shop, obstricting of the custom.'

'Of course there would,' assented William. 'We must try for that failure in the rear, after all.'

CHAPTER XV.

FRUITS COMING HOME TO THE DARES.

The Pyramids of Egypt grew, in the course of time and by dint of dense labour, into pyramids—as was oracularly remarked by Sergeant Delves; but that official's exertions, labour as hard as he would, grew into nothing—when applied to the cause to which he had compared the pyramids. All the inquiry, all the searching brought to bear upon it by him and his co-adherents, did not bring to light aught of Herbert Dare's movements on that fatal night. Where he had passed the hours remained an impenetrable mystery; and the sergeant had to confess himself foiled. He came, not unnaturally, to the conclusion that Herbert Dare was not anywhere, so far as the outer world was concerned—that he had been at home, committing the mischief. A conclusion which the sergeant had drawn in the first onset, and it had never been shaken. Nevertheless, it was his duty to put all the skill and craft of the local police force into action; and very close inquiries were made. Every house of entertainment in the city, of whatever nature—whether it might be a billiard room, or an oyster-shop; whether it might be a grand hotel, or an obscure public-house—was visited and keenly questioned; but nobody would acknowledge to having seen Herbert Dare on the particular evening. In short, no trace of him could be unearthed.

'Just as much out as I was,' said the sergeant to himself. And Helstonleigh held to the same conviction.

Pomeranian Knoll was desolate; with a desolation it had never expected to fall upon it. A shattering blow had been struck Mr. and Mrs. Dare. To lose their eldest son in so terrible a manner, seemed, of itself, enough of agony for a whole lifetime. Whatever may have been his faults—and Helstonleigh knew that he was somewhat rich in faults—he was dear to them; dearer than her other children to Mrs. Dare. Herbert had remarked, in conversing with Anna Lynn, that Anthony was his mother's favourite. It was so; she had loved him deeply, she had been blin

to his failings. Neither Mr. Dare nor his wife was amongst the religious of the world; religious reflections. they, in common with many others in Helstonleigh, were content to leave to some remote deathbed. But they had been less than human, worse than heathen, could they be insensible to the fate of Anthony—hurled away with his sins upon his head. He was cut off suddenly from this world, and—what of the next? It was a question, an uncertainty, that they dared not follow; and they sat, one on each side their desolate hearth, and wailed forth their vain anguish.

This would, in truth, have been tribulation sufficient to have overshadowed a life; but there was more beyond it. Hemmed in by pride, as the Dares had been, playing at great and grand in Helstonleigh, the situation of Herbert, putting aside their fears or their sympathy for himself, was about the most complete checkmate that could have fallen upon them. It was the cup of humiliation drained to the dregs. Whether he should be proved guilty or not, he was thrown into prison as a common felon, awaiting his trial for murder; and that disgrace could not be wiped out. Did they believe him guilty? They did not know themselves. To suspect him of such a crime, was painful in the last degree to their feelings: but—why did he persist in refusing to state where he was on the eventful night? There was the point that staggered them.

A deep gloom overhung the house, extending to all its inmates. Even the servants went about with sad faces and quiet steps. The young ladies knew that a calamity had been dealt to them from which they should never wholly recover. Their star of brilliance, in its little sphere of light at Helstonleigh, had faded into dimness, if not wholly gone down beneath the horizon. Should Herbert be found guilty, it could never rise again. Adelaide rarely spoke; she appeared to possess some inward source of vexation or grief, apart from the general tribulation. At least so judged the Signora Varsini; and she was a shrewd observer. She, Miss Dare, spent most of her time shut up in her own room. Rosa and Minny were chiefly with their governess. They were getting of an age to feel it in an equal degree with the rest. Rosa was eighteen, and had begun to go out with Mrs. Dare and Adelaide. Minny was anticipating to go. It was all stopped now—visiting, gaity, pleasure; and it was felt as a part of the misfortune. The first shock of the occurrence subsided, the funeral over, and the family settled down in its mourning, the governess exacted their studies from her two pupils as before. They were loth to re-commence them, and appealed to their mamma. 'It was cruel of mademoiselle to wish it of them,' they said. Mademoiselle rejoined that her motive was anything but a cruel one; she felt sure that occupation for the mind was the best counteractian to grief. If they would not study, where was the use of her remaining? she demanded. Madame Dare had better allow her to leave. She would go without notice, if Madame pleased; she should be glad to get back to the Continent. They did not have murders there in society; at least she, mademoiselle, had never endured personal experience of such. Mrs. Dare did not appear willing to accede to the proposition; the governess was a most efficient instructress; and six or twelve months more of her services would be essential to the turning out of her pupils, if they were to be turned out as pupils ought. Besides, Mr. Sergeant Delves had intimated that the Signora's testimony would be necessary on the trial, and therefore she could not be allowed to depart. Mr. Dare thought if they did allow her to depart, they might be accused of wishing to suppress evidence, and it might tell against Herbert. So mademoiselle had to resign herself to remaining. 'Tres bien,' she equably said, 'she was willing—only the young ladies must resume their lessons.' A mandate in which Mrs Dare acquiesced.

Sometimes Minny, who was given to be incorrigibly idle, would burst into tears over the trouble of her work, and then lay it upon her distress touching the uncertain fate of Herbert. One day, upon her doing this, the governess broke out harply—

'He deserves to lie in prison, does Monsieur Herbert!'

'Why do you say that, Mademoiselle?' asked Minny, in a resentful tone.

'Because he is a fool,' politely returned mademoiselle. 'He say, does he not, that he was not home at the time. It is well; but why does he not say where he was? I think he is a fool, me.'

'You may as well say outright, mademoiselle, that you think him guilty!' retorted Minny.

'But I not think him guilty,' dissented mademoiselle. 'I have said from the first that he was not guilty. I think he is not one capable of doing such an injury to his brother or to any one else. I used to be great friends with Monsieur Herbert once, when I gave him those Italian lessons, and I never saw to make me believe his disposition was a cruel.'

In point of fact, the governess, more explicitly than any one else in the house, had declared all along her belief in Herbert's innocence. Truly and sincerely she did not believe him capable of so grievous a crime. He was not of a cruel or revengeful disposition: certainly not one to lie in wait, and attack another savagely and secretly. She had never believed that he was, and would

not believe it now. Neither had his family. Sergeant Delves's opinion was, that whoever had attacked Anthony *had* lain in wait for him in the dining-room, and had sprung upon him as he entered. It is possible, however, that the same point staggered mademoiselle that staggered the rest—Herbert Dare's refusing to state where he was at the time. Believing, as she did, that he could account for it if he chose, she deemed herself perfectly justified in applying to him the complimentary epithet you have just heard. She expressed true sympathy and regret at the untimely fate of Anthony, lamenting him much and genuinely.

Upon Cyril and George the punishment also fell. With one brother not cold in his grave, and the other thrown into jail to await his trial for murder, they could not, for shame, pursue their amusements as formerly; and amusements to Cyril and George Dare had become a necessity of daily life. Their friends and companions were growing shy of them—or else they fancied it. Conscience is all too suggestive. They fancied people shunned them when they walked along the street: Cyril, even, as he stood in Samuel Lynn's room at the manufactory, thought the men, as they passed in and out, looked askance at him. Very likely it was only imagination. George Dare had sat his heart upon a commission; one of the members for the city had made a half-promise to Mr Dare, that he would 'see what could be done at the Horse Guards.' Failing available interest in that quarter, George was in hopes his father would screw out money to purchase one. But, until Herbert should be proved innocent (if that time should ever arrive,) the question of his entering the army must remain in abeyance. This state of things altogether did not give pleasure to Cyril and George Dare. But there was no remedy for it, and they had to content themselves with sundry private explosions of temper, by way of relief to their minds.

Yes, the evil fell upon all; upon the parents, and upon the children. Of course they, the latter, suffered nothing in comparison to Mr. and Mrs. Dare. Unhappy days, restless nights, were their portion now: the world seemed to be growing too miserable to live in.

'There must be a fate upon the boys!' Mr. Dare exclaimed one day, in the bitterness of his spirit, as he paced the room with restless steps, his wife sitting moodily, her elbow on the centre table, her cheek pressed upon her hand. 'Unless there had been a fate upon them, they never could have turned out as they have.'

Mrs. Dare resented the speech. In her unhappy frame of mind, which told terribly upon her temper, it seemed a sort of relief to resent everything. If Mr. Dare spoke against their sons, she stood up for them. 'Turned out!' she repeated angrily.

'Let us say, as things have turned out, then, if you will. They appear to be turning out pretty badly, as it seems to me. The boys have had every indulgence in life; they have enjoyed a luxurious home; they have ruined me to supply their extravagances ——'

'Ruined you!' again resented Mrs. Dare.

'Ay, ruined. It has all but come to it. And yet, what benefit has the indulgence, or have the advantages brought them? Far better—I begin to see it now—that they had been reared to self-denial: made to work for their daily bread.'

'How can you give utterance to such things!' rejoined Mrs. Dare, in a chafed tone.

Mr. Dare stopped in his restless pacing, and confronted his wife. 'Are we happy in our sons Speak the truth.'

'How could any one be happy, overwhelmed with a misfortune such as this?'

'Put that aside; what are they without it? Rebellious to us; of ill conduct in the sight of the world.'

'Who says they are of ill conduct?' asked Mrs. Dare, an undercurrent of consciousness whispering that she need not have made the objection. 'They may be a little wild; but it is a common failing with those of their age and condition. Their faults are but faults of youth and of uncurbed spirits.'

'I wish, then, their spirits had been curbed,' was the reply of Mr. Dare. 'It is useless now to reproach each other,' he continued, resuming his walk; 'but there must have been something radically wrong in the bringing of them up. Anthony gone; Herbert, perhaps, to follow him by almost a worse death, certainly a more disgraceful one; Cyril——'

Mr. Dare stopped abruptly in his catalogue, and went on more generally.

'There is no comfort in them for us; there never will be any.'

'What can you bring against Cyril?' sharply asked Mrs. Dare. It may be, that these complainings of her husband chafed her temper—chafed, perhaps, her conscience. Certain it was they rendered her irritable; and Mr. Dare had latterly indulged in them frequently. 'If Cyril is a little wild, it is a gentlemanly failing. There's nothing else to urge against him.'

'Is theft gentlemanly?'

'Theft!' repeated Mrs. Dare.

'Theft. I have concealed many things from you, Julia, wishing to spare your feelings. But it may be as well now that you should know a

little more of what your sons really are. Cyril might have stood where Herbert will stand—at the criminal bar; though for a crime of less degree. For all I can tell, he may stand at it now.'

Mrs. Dare looked scared. 'What has he done?' she asked, her tone growing timid.

'I say that I have kept these things from you I wish I could have kept them always; but it seems to me that exposure is arising in many ways, and it is better you should be prepared for it, if it must come. I awake now in the morning to apprehension; I am alarmed throughout the day at my own shadow, dreading what unknown fate may not be falling upon them. Herbert in peril of the hangman: Cyril in peril of a forced voyage to the penal colonies.'

A sensation of utter fear stole over Mrs. Dare. For the moment, she could not speak. But she rallied her powers to defend Cyril.

I think Cyril is hardly used, what with one thing and another. He was to have gone on that French journey, and at the last moment he was pushed out of it for Halliburton. I felt more vexed at it, almost, than Cyril could, and I spoke a word of my mind to Mrs. Ashley.'

'You did?'

'Yes. I did not speak of it in the light of disappointment to Cyril, the actual fact of not taking the journey, so much as of the vexation he experienced at being supplanted in it by one whom he—whom we all—consider inferior to himself, William Halliburton. I let Mrs. Ashley know that we regarded it as a most unmerited and uncalled-for slight; and I took care to drop a hint that we believed Halliburton to have been guilty in that cheque affair.'

Mr. Dare paused. 'What did Mrs. Ashley say?' he presently asked.

'She said very little. I never saw her so frigid. She intimated that Mr. Ashley was a competent judge of his own business——'

'I mean as to the cheque?' interrupted Mr. Dare.

'She was more frigid over that than over the other. She preferred not to discuss it, she answered; who it might be, stole it, or who not.'

'I can set you right on both points,' said Mr Dare. 'Cyril came to me, complaining of being superseded in this French journey, and I complied with his request that I should go and remonstrate with Mr. Ashley—being a sim, letter for my pains. Mr Ashley informed me that he never had entertained the slightest intention of despatching Cyril, and why Cyril should have taken up the notion, he could not tell. Mr Ashley continued to say that he did not consider Cyril of sufficiently steady conduct to intrust abroad alone——'

'Steady conduct!' echoed Mrs. Dare. 'What has steadiness of conduct to do with executing a commission of business? And as to being alone, the Quaker Lynn went.'

'But, at the first onset, which was the time I spoke, Mr. Ashley's intention was to despatch only one—Halliburton. He said that Cyril's want of steadiness would always have been a bar to his thinking of him. Shall I go on and enlighten you on the other point—the cheque?' Mr. Dare added, after a pause.

'Y—es,' she answered, a nervous dread causing her to speak with hesitation. Had she a foreshadow of what was coming?

'It was Cyril who took it,' said Mr. Dare, dropping his voice to a whisper.

'Cyril!' she gasped.

'Our son, Cyril. No other.'

Mrs Dare took her hand from her cheek and leaned back in the chair. She was very pale.

'He was traced to White's shop, where he changed the cheque for gold. He had put on Herbert's cloak, the plaid lining outside. When he began to fear detection, he ripped the lining out, and left the cloak in the state it is—now in the possession of the police. Some of the jags and cuts have been sewn up, I suppose by one of the servants; I made no close inquiries. That cloak,' he added, with a passing shiver, 'might tell queer tales of our sons, if it were able to speak.'

'How did you know it was Cyril?' breathed Mrs. Dare.

'From Delves.'

'Delves! Does *he* know it?'

'He does. And the man is holding the secret out of consideration for us. Delves has a good heart at bottom. Not but what I spoke a friendly word for him when he was made sergeant. It all tells.'

'And Mr. Ashley?' she asked.

'There is little doubt that Ashley has some suspicion: the very fact of his not making a stir in it proves that he has. It would not please him that a relative—as Cyril is—should stand his trial for felony.'

'How harshly you put it!' exclaimed Mrs. Dare, bursting into tears. 'Felony!'

'Nay, what else can I call it?'

The colonel paused. Mr. Dare resumed his solemn pacing. Mrs Dare sat with her handkerchief to her face. Presently she looked up.

'They said it was Halliburton's cloak that the person was wearing to change the cheque?'

'It was not Halliburton's. It was Herbert's turned inside out. Herbert knew nothing of it, for I questioned him: he had gone out that night, leaving his cloak hanging in his closet. I asked

him how it happened that his cloak, on the inside, should resemble Halliburton's, and he said it was an accidental coincidence. I don't believe him. I entertain little doubt that it was contrived with a view to the enacting of some mischief. In fact, what with one revelation and another, I live, as I say, in perpetual dread of new troubles turning up.'

Bitter, most bitter were these revelations to Mrs. Dare; bitter had they been to her husband. Too swiftly were the fruits of their children's rearing coming home to them, bringing their recompense. 'There must be a fate upon the boys!' he reiterated. Possibly. But had neither parents nor children done aught to invoke it?

'Since these evils have come upon our house—the fate of Anthony, the uncertainty overhanging Herbert, the certain guilt of Cyril,' resumed Mr. Dare, 'I have asked myself whether the money we inherited from old Mr. Cooper may not have wrought ill for us, instead of good.'

'Have wrought ill?'

'Aye! Brought with it a curse, instead of a blessing.'

She made no remark.

'He warned us that, if we took Edgar Halliburton's share, it would not bring us good Do you remember how eagerly he spoke it? We did take it,' Mr. Dare added, dropping his voice to the lowest whisper. 'And I believe it has just acted as a curse.'

'You are fanciful!' she cried, her hands shivering, as she raised her handkerchief to wipe her pale face.

'No; there's no fancy in it. We should have done well to attend to the warning of the dying Heaven is my witness that, at the time, such a thought as that of appropriating it to ourselves, never crossed my mind. We launched out into expense, and the other share became a necessity It is that expense which has ruined our children.'

'How can you say it?' she rejoined, lifting her hands in a passionate sort of manner.

'It has been nothing else. Had they been reared more plainly, they would not have acquired those extravagant notions which have been their bane. Without that inheritance, and the style of living we allowed it to entail upon us, the boys must have understood that they would have to earn money before they spent it, and they would have put their shoulders to the wheel. Julia,' he continued, halting by her and stretching forth his troubled face until it nearly touched hers, 'it might have been well now, well with them and with us, had our children been obliged to buffet with the poverty to which we condemned the Halliburtons.'

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UGLY VISION.

Mr. Dare had not taken upon himself the legal conduct of his son Herbert's case. It had been intrusted to the care of a solicitor in Helstonleigh, Mr. Winthorne. This gentleman, more forcibly than anybody else, urged upon Herbert Dare the necessity of declaring—if he could declare—where he had been on the night of the murder. He very clearly foresaw that, if his client persisted in his present silence, there was no chance of any result but the worst.

He could obtain no response. Deaf to him, as he had been to others, Herbert Dare would disclose nothing. In vain Mr. Winthorne pointed to consequences: first, by delicate hints; next, by hints not delicate; then, by speaking out broadly and fully. It is not pleasant to tell your client, in so many words, that he will be hanged and nothing can save him, unless he compels you to it. Herbert Dare compelled Mr. Winthorne. All in vain. Mr. Winthorne found he might just as well talk to the walls of the cell. Herbert Dare declared in the most positive manner, that he had been out the whole of the time stated—from half-past eight o'clock, or thereabouts, until nearly two; and from this declaration he never swerved.

Mr. Winthorne was perplexed. The prisoner's assertions were so uniformly earnest, bearing so apparently the stamp of truth, that he could not disbelieve him: or rather, sometimes he believed, and sometimes he doubted. It is true that Herbert's declarations did wear an air of entire truth; but Mr. Winthorne had been engaged for criminal offenders before, and knew what the assertions of a great many of them were worth. Down deep in his heart he reasoned very much after the manner of Sergeant Delves. 'If he had been absent, he'd confess it to save his neck.' He said so to Herbert.

Herbert took the matter, on the whole, coolly, he had done so from the beginning. He did not believe that his neck was really in jeopardy. 'They'll never find me guilty,' was his belief. He could not avoid standing his trial: that was a calamity from which there was no escape: but he steadily refused to look at its results in a sombre light.

'*Can* you tell me where you were?' Mr. Winthorne one morning impulsively asked him, when June was drawing to its close.

'I could if I liked,' replied Herbert Dare. 'I suppose you mean, by that, to throw a shaft of discredit on what I say, Winthorne; but you are wrong. I could point out to you and to all Hels-

tonleigh where I was that night; but I will not. I have my reasons, and I will not.'

'Then you will fall,' said the lawyer. 'The very fact of there being no other quarter, save yourself, on which to cast a shadow of suspicion, will tell against you. You have been bred to the law, must see these things as plainly as I can put them.'

'There's the point that puzzles me—who it can have been who did the injury. I'd give half my remaining life to know.'

Mr. Winthorne thought that the whole of it, to judge by present appearances, might not be an inconveniently prolonged period; but he did not say so. 'What is your objection to speak?' he asked?

'You have put the same question about fifty times, Winthorne, and you'll never get any different answer than the one you have had already—that I don't choose to state it.'

'I suppose you were not committing murder in another quarter of the town, were you?'

'I suppose I was not,' equably returned Herbert.

'Then, failing that crime, there's no other in the decalogue that I'd not confess to, to save my life. Whether I was robbing a bank, or setting a church on fire, I'd tell it out, rather than be hanged by the neck until I was dead.'

'Ah, but I was not doing either,' said Herbert.

'Then there's the less reason for your persisting in the observance of so much mystery.'

'My doing so is my own business,' returned Herbert.

'No, it is not your own business,' objected Mr. Winthorne. 'You assert that you are innocent of the crime with which you are charged——'

'I assert nothing but truth,' interrupted Herbert.

'Good. Then, if you are innocent, and if you can prove your innocence, it is your duty to your family to do it. A man's duties in this life are not owing to himself alone: above all, a son's. He owes allegiance to his father and mother; his consideration for them should be above his consideration for himself. If you can prove your innocence it will be an unpardonable sin not to do it; a sin inflicted on your family.'

'I can't help it,' replied Herbert, in his obstinacy. I have my reasons for not speaking, and I shall not speak.'

'You will surely suffer the penalty,' said Mr. Winthorne.

'Then I must suffer it,' returned the prisoner.

But it is one thing to talk, and another to do. Many a brave spirit, quite ready and willing to undergo hanging in theory, would find his heart fail and his legs shake, would find his bravery altogether die out, were he really required to reduce it to practice. Herbert Dare was but human. After July had come in, and the time to the period, fixed for the opening of the assizes, might be counted by hours, then his courage began to flinch. He spent a night in tossing from side to side on his pallet (a wide difference between that and his comfortable feather-bed at home), during which a certain ugly apparatus, to be erected for his especial benefit within the walls of the prison some fine Saturday morning, on which he might figure by no means gracefully, had mentally disturbed his rest. He arose unrefreshed. The vision of that possible future was not a pleasant one. Herbert remembered once when he had been a college boy, that the Saturday morning's occasional drama had been enacted for the warning and edification of the town, and of the country people flocking into it for market. The college boys had determined, for once in their lives, to see the sight—if they could accomplish it. The ceremony was invariably performed at eight o'clock; the exhibition closed at nine: and the difficulty of the boys was, how to arrive at the scene in time, considering that it was only at the striking of the latter hour that they were let loose down the steps of the school. They had tried the *time* between the cloisters and the county prison; and found that by dint of taking the short way through the back streets, tearing along at the fleetest pace, and knocking over every obstruction—human, animal, or solid—that might unfortunately be in their path, they could do the distance in four minutes. Arriving rather out of wind, it's true: but that was nothing. Four minutes! they did not see their way clear. If the curtain descended at nine, sharp, as good be forty minutes after the hour, as four, in point of practical fact. But the Helstonleigh college boys—as you may sometime have heard remarked before—were not wont to allow difficulties to overmaster them. If there was a possible way of getting through obstacles, they were sure to find it. Consultations had been anxious. To request the head-master to allow them as a favour to depart five or ten minutes before the usual time, would be worse than useless. It was a question whether he ever would have acceded to it; but there was no chance of it on *that* morning. Neither could the whole school be taken summarily with stomach-ache, or croup, or any other excruciating malady, necessitating compassion and an early dismissal. They came to the resolve of applying to the official who had under his charge the cathedral clock; or, as they phrased it, 'coming over the clock-man.' By dint of coaxing, or bribery, or some other element of persuasion, they got this functionary to promise to put the clock on eight minutes on that particular morn-

ing. And it was done. And at eight minutes before nine by the sun, the cathedral clock rung out its nine strokes. But, instead of the master lifting his finger—the signal for the boys to tear forth—the master sat quiet at his desk, and never gave it. He sat until the eight minutes had gone by, when the other churches in the town gave out their hour; he sat *four minutes after that:* and then he nodded them their dismissal. The twelve minutes had seemed to the boys like twelve hours. Where the hitch was, they never knew; they never have known to this day; as they would tell you for themselves. Whether the master got an inkling of what was in the wind; or whether, by one of the extraordinary coincidences that sometimes occur in life, he, for that one morning, allowed the hour to slip by unheeded—had not heard it strike—they could not tell. He gave out no clue, then, or afterwards. The clock-man protested that he had been true: had not breathed a hint to anybody living of the purposed advancement; and the boys had no reason to disbelieve him. However it might have been, they could not altar it. It was four minutes past nine when they clattered *pele-mele* down the schoolroom steps. Away they tore, full of fallacious hope, out at the cloisters, through the cathedral precincts, along the nearest streets, and arrived within the given four minutes, rather than over it. Alas, for human expectations! The prison was there it is true, formidable as usual; but all trace of the morning's jubilee had passed away. Not only had the chief actor been removed, but also that ugly apparatus which Herbert Dare had dreamt of. *That* might have afforded them some gratification to contemplate, failing the great sight. The college boys, struck dumb in the first moment with their disappointment, gave vent to it at length, in three dismal groans, the echoes of which might have been heard as far as the cathedral. Groans not intended for the unhappy mortal, then beyond hearing that, or any other earthly sound; not for the officials of the county prison, all too quick-handed that morning, but given as a compliment to the respected gentleman at that time holding the situation of head-master.

Herbert Dare remembered this; it was rising up in his mind with strange distinctness. He himself had been one of the deputation chosen to 'come over' the clock-man, had been the chief persuader of that functionary. Would the college boys hasten down if *he* were to—— In spite of his bravery, he broke off the speculation with a shudder; and calling the turnkey to him, he despatched a message for Mr. Winthorne. Was it the remembrance of his old schoolfellows, of what *they* would think of him, that effected what no other consideration had been able to effect?

As much indulgence as it was possible to allow to a prisoner was accorded to Herbert Dare: indeed it may be questioned whether any previous prisoner, incarcerated within the walls of the county prison, had ever enjoyed so much. The governor of the prison and Mr. Dare had lived on intimate terms. Mr. Dare and his two elder sons had been familiar, in their legal capacity, with both its civil and criminal prisoners; and the turnkeys had often bowed Herbert in and out of cells, as they now bowed out Mr. Winthorne. Altogether, what with the governor's friendly feeling, and the turnkeys' reverential one, Herbert Dare obtained more privileges than the common run of prisoners. The message was at once taken to Mr Winthorne, and it brought that gentleman back.

'I have made up my mind to tell,' was Herbert's brief salutation when he entered.

'A very sensible resolution,' replied the lawyer. Doubts, however, crossed his mind as he spoke, whether the prisoner was not about to set up some plea which never had place in fact. As Sergeant Delves had, Mr. Winthorne had arrived at the firm belief that there was nothing to tell.

'Well?' said he.

'That is, conditionally,' resumed Herbert Dare. 'It would be of little use my saying I was at such and such a place, unless I could bring forward confirmatory testimony.'

'Of course it would not.'

'Well; there are witnesses who could give this satisfactory evidence; but the question is, will they be willing to do it?'

'What motive or excuse could they have for refusing?' returned Mr. Winthorne. 'When a fellow-creature's life is at stake, surely there is no man so lost to humanity, as not to come forward and save it, if it be in his power.'

'Circumstances alter cases,' was the curt reply of Herbert Dare.

'Was it your doubt, as to whether they would come forward, that caused you to hesitate at calling on them?' asked Mr. Winthorne, something not pleasant in his tone.

'Not altogether. I foresaw a difficulty in it; I foresee it still. Winthorne, you look at me with a face full of doubt. There's no cause for it—as you will find.'

'Well, go on,' said the lawyer; for Herbert had stopped.

'The thing must be gone about in a very cautious manner; and I don't quite see how it can be done,' resumed Herbert, slowly. 'Winthorne, I think I had better make a confidant of you, and tell you the whole story from beginning to end.'

'If I am to do you any good, I must hear it, I expect. A man can't work in the dark.'

'Sit you down there then, and I'll begin. Though, mind—I tell it you in confidence. It's not for Helstonleigh. But you will see the expediency of being silent when you have heard it.'

CHAPTER XVII.

SERGEANT DELVES 'LOOKS UP.'

The following Saturday was the day fixed for the opening of the commission at Helstonleigh. It soon came round, and the streets, in the afternoon, wore their usual holiday appearance. The high sheriff's procession went out to meet the judges, and groups, stood about waiting and watching for its return. Amongst other people blocking up the way, might be observed the portly person of Sergeant Delves. He strolled along, seeming to look at nothing, but his keen eye was everywhere. It suddenly fell upon Mr. Winthorne, who was picking his way through the crowd as fast as he could pick it, apparently in a hurry. Hurry or not, Sergeant Delves stopped him, and drew him to a safe spot beyond the reach of curious ears.

'I was looking for you, Mr. Winthorne,' cried Delves, in a confidential tone. 'I say—this tale, that Dare will succeed in establishing an *alibi*, is it reliable?'

'Why—who the mischief can have been setting that afloat?' returned the lawyer, in a tone of the utmost astonishment, not unmixed with vexation.

'Dare himself was my informant,' replied the sergeant. 'I was in the prison just now, and saw him in the yard with the turnkey. He called me aside, and told me he was as good as acquitted.'

'Then he is an idiot for his pains. He had no right to talk of it, even to you.'

'*I* am dark,' carelessly returned Delves. 'I don't wish ill to the Dares, and I'd not work it to 'em; as perhaps some of them could tell you,' he added, in a significant tone. 'What about this acquittal that he talks of?'

'There's no doubt he will be acquitted. He will prove an *alibi*.'

'Is it a got-up *alibi*?' asked the plain-speaking sergeant.

'No. And as far as I go, I would not lend myself to the getting up of a falsity,' observed the solicitor. 'He has said from the first, you know, that he was not near the house at the time, and so it will turn out.'

'Has he confessed where he was, after all his standing out?'

'Yes; to me. It will be disclosed at the trial.'

'He was after no good, I know,' nodded the sergeant oracularly.

Mr. Winthorne raised his eyebrows, and slightly jerked his shoulders. The movement may have meant anything or nothing. He did not reply in words.

Sergeant Delves fell into a reverie. He roused himself from it to take a searching gaze at the lawyer. 'Sir,' said he, and he could hardly have spoken more earnestly had his life depended on it. 'Tell me the truth out-and-out. Do you, yourself, from the depths of your own judgment, believe Herbert Dare to have been innocent?'

'Delves, as truly as that you and I now stand here, I honestly believe that he had no more to do with his brother's death than we had.'

'Then I'm blest if I don't take up the other scent!' exclaimed Mr. Delves, slapping his thigh. 'I did think of it once, but I dropped it again, so sure was I that it was Master Herbert.'

'What scent is that?'

'Look here,' said the sergeant—'but now it's my turn to warn you to be dark. There was a young woman met Anthony Dare the night of the murder, when he was going down to the Star-and-Garter. It's a young woman he did not behave genteel to, some time back, as the ghost says in the song. She met him that night, and she gave him a bit of her tongue; not much, for he wouldn't stop to listen. But now, Mr. Winthorne, it has crossed my mind many times, whether she might not have watched for his going home again, and followed him; followed him right into the dining-room, and done the mischief. I'll lay a guinea it was her!' added the sergeant, arriving at a hasty conclusion. 'I shall look up again now.'

'Do you mean that young woman in Honey Fair?' asked Mr. Winthorne.

'Just so. Her, and nobody else. The doubt has crossed me; but, as I say, I was so certain it was the brother, that I did not follow it up.'

'Could a woman's feeble hand inflict such injuries?' debated the solicitor.

'Feeble be hanged!' politely rejoined the sergeant. 'Some women have got the fists of men; and the strength of 'em, too. You don't know 'em as we do. A desperate woman 'll do anything. And Anthony Dare, remember, had not got his force in him that night.'

Mr. Winthorne shook his head. 'That girl has no look of ferocity about her. I should question its being she. Let's see—what is her name?'

'Look!' returned the sergeant. 'When you have had half as much to do with people as I have, you'll have learnt not to go by looks. Her name's Caroline Mason.'

At that moment the cathedral bells rang out,

giving token of the return of the procession, the advent of the judges. As if the sound reminded the lawyer of the speed of time, he hastily sped on his way; leaving the sergeant to use his eyes and ears at the expense of the crowd.

'I wonder how the prisoners in the jails feels?' remarked a woman, whom the sergeant recognized as being no other than Mrs. Cross. She had just come out of a warehouse with her supply of work for the ensuing week.

'Ah, poor creatures?' responded another of the group, and *that* was Mrs. Brumm. 'I wonder how young Dare likes it?'

'Or how old Dare likes it—if he can hear 'em all the way up at his office. They'll know their fate soon, them two.'

In the close vicinity of this colloquy was a young woman, drawn against the wall, under the shelter of a protecting doorway. Her once good-looking face was haggard, and her clothes were scanty; for this reason, perhaps, it was, that she appeared to shun observation. Sergeant Delves, apparently without any other design than that of working his way leisurely through the throng, edged himself close to her.

'Looking out for the show, Miss Mason?'

Caroline turned her spiritless eyes upon him. 'I'm waiting till there's a way cleared for me to get myself through, without pushing against folks, and contaminating of 'em. What's the show to me, or me to it?'

'At the last assizes, in March, when the judges came in, young Anthony Dare made one in the streets, looking on,' resumed the sergeant, chatting affably. 'I saw him and spoke to him. And now he is gone where there's no shows to see.'

She made no reply.

'The women there,' pointing his thumb at the group of talkers hard by, 'are saying that Herbert Dare won't like the sound of the college bells. Hey, me! Look at them young toads of college boys, just let out of college!' broke off the sergeant, as a tribe of some twenty of the king's scholars came fighting and elbowing their way through the throng to the front. 'They are just like so many wild colts? Maybe the prisoner, Herbert Dare, is now casting his thoughts back to the time when he made one of the band, and was as free from care as they be. It's not so long ago.'

Caroline Mason asked a question somewhat abruptly. 'Will he be found guilty, sir, do you think?'

The sergeant turned the tail of his keen eye upon her, and answered the question by asking another. 'Do you?'

She shook her head. 'I don't think he was guilty.'

'You don't?'

'No, I don't. Why should one brother kill another?'

'Very true,' coughed the sergeant. 'But somebody must have done it. If Herbert Dare did not, who did?'

'Ah! who did? I'd like to know,' she passionately added. 'He had got folks in this town that owed him grudges, had Mr. Anthony Dare.'

'If my vision didn't deceive me, I saw you talking to him that very same night,' carelessly observed the sergeant.

'Did you see me?' she rejoined, apparently as much at ease as the sergeant himself. 'I had to do an errand at that end of the town, and I met him, and told him what he was. I hadn't spoke to him for months and months; for years, I think. I had slipped into doors, down entries, anywhere to avoid him, if I saw him coming; but a feeling came over me to speak to him then. I'm glad I did. I hope the truths I said to him went along with him to enliven him on his journey!'

'Did you see him after that, later in the evening?' resumed the inspector, putting the question sociably, and stretching his neck up to obtain a view of something at a distance.

'No. I didn't,' she replied. 'But I would, if I had thought it was going to be his last. I'd have bade him remember all his good works where he was going to. I'd almost have went with him, I would, to have heard how he answered for them, up there.'

Caroline Mason glanced upwards to indicate the sky, when a loud flourish of trumpets from the advancing heralds sounded close upon them. As they rode up at a foot pace, they dropped their trumpets, and the mounted javelin-men quickly followed them, bearing their javelins in rest. A carriage or two; a few more officials; and there advanced the beautiful equipage of the high sheriff, its horses caparisoned with silver. Only one of the judges was in it; he was fully robed: a fine man, with a benign countenance. A grave smile was on it as he spoke with the sheriff, who sat opposite to him, his chaplain by his side.

Sergeant Delves' attention was distracted for an instant, and when he looked round again, Caroline Mason had disappeared. He just caught sight of her in the distance, winding her way through the crowd, her head down.

'Did she do it, or not?' cried the sergeant, in self-soliloquy. 'Go on, go on, my lady, for the present; you are a-going to be a bit looked after.'

How *did* the prisoners feel, and Herbert Dare amongst them, as the joyous sounds, outside, fell upon their ears: the blast of the trumpets, the sweet melody of the bells, the stir of life: pene-

trating within the walls of the city and county prisons? Did they feel that the pomp and show, run after as a holiday sight, was but a cruel advent to them?—that the formidable and fiery vision in the scarlet robe and flowing wig, who sat in the fine carriage, bending his serene face upon the mob, collected to stare and shout, might prove the pronouncer of their doom?—a doom that should close the portals of this world upon them, and open those of eternity!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRIAL.

Tuesday morning was the day fixed for the trial of Herbert Dare. You might have walked upon the people's heads in the vicinity of the Guildhall, for all the town was wishing to get in to hear it. Of course but a very small portion of the town, speaking relatively, could get its wish, or succeed in fighting a way to a place. Of the rest, some went back to their homes, disappointed and exploding; and the rest collected outside, and blocked up the street. The police had their work cut out that day; while the javelin-men, heralding in the judges, experienced great difficulty in keeping clear the passages. The heat in court would be desperate as the day advanced.

Sir William Leader, as senior judge, took his seat in the criminal court. It was he whom you saw in the sheriff's carriage on Saturday. The same benignant face was bent upon the crowded court that had been bent upon the street mob the same the penetrating eye, the same the grave, calm bearing. The prisoner was immediately placed at the bar, and all eyes, strange or familiar, were strained to get a look at him. They saw a tall, handsome young man, looking too gentlemanly to stand in the felon's dock. He was habited in deep mourning. His countenance, usually somewhat conspicuous for its clear brightness of complexion, was pale, probably from the moment's emotion, and his white handkerchief was lifted to his mouth as he moved forward; otherwise he was calm. Old Anthony Dare was in court, looking far more agitated than did his son. Preliminaries were got through, and the trial began.

'Prisoner at the bar, how say you? Are you guilty, or not guilty?'

Herbert Dare raised his eyes fearlessly, and pleaded in a firm tone—

'Not Guilty!'

The leading counsel for the prosecution, Sergeant Seeitall, stated the case. His address occupied some time, and he then proceeded to call witnesses. One of those first examined was Betsy Carter. She deposed to the facts of having sat up with the lady's-maid and Joseph, until the return of Mr. and Mrs. Dare and their daughter, and, to having then gone into the dining-room with a light to get Mr. Dare's pipe, which she had left there in the morning, when cleaning the room. 'In moving forward with the candle, I saw something dark on the ground,' continued Betsy, who, when her primary timidity had gone off, seemed inclined to be very communicative. 'At the first glance, I thought it was one of the gentlemen gone to sleep there; but when I stooped down with the light, I saw the face was dead. Awful, it looked!'

'What did you next do?' demanded the examining counsel.

'Screeched out, gentlemen,' responded Betsy.

'What else?'

'I went out of the room, screeching to Joseph in the hall, and master came in from outside the front door, where he was waiting, all peaceful and ignorant, for his pipe, little thinking what there was so close to him. I screeched out all the more, gentlemen, when I remembered the quarrel that had took place at dinner that afternoon, and I knew it was nobody but Mr. Herbert that had done the murder.'

The witness was sharply told to confine herself to evidence.

'It couldn't be nobody else,' retorted Betsy, who had a tongue, once set going, that was a match for any cross-examiner. 'There was the cloak to prove it. Mr. Herbert had gone out in the cloak that very night, and the poor dead gentleman was lying on it. Which proves it must have come off in the scuffle between 'em.

The fact of the quarrel, the facts connected with the cloak, as well as all other facts, had been mentioned by the learned sergeant, Seeitall, in his opening address. The witness was questioned as to what she knew of the quarrel; but it appeared that she had not been present; consequently could not testify to it. The cloak she could say more about, and spoke of it confidently as Mr. Herbert's.

'How did you know the cloak, found under the dead man, was Mr. Herbert's?' interposed the prisoner's counsel, Mr. Chattaway.

'Because I did,' returned the witness.

'I ask you how you knew it?'

'By lots of tokens,' she answered. 'By the shiny black clasp, for one thing, and by the tears and jags in it, for another. Nobody has never pretended it was not the cloak, have they? I have seen it fifty times hanging up in Mr. Herbert's closet.'

'You saw the prisoner going out in it that evening?'

'Yes, I did,' she answered. 'I was looking out at Miss Adelaide's chamber window, and I saw him come out of the dining-room window and go off towards the front gates. The gentlemen often went out through the dining-room window, instead of at the hall door.'

'The prisoner says he came back immediately, and left his cloak in the dining-room, going out finally without it. Did you see him come back?'

'No, I didn't replied Betsy:

'How long did you remain at the window?'

'Not long.'

'Did you remain long enough for him to cross the lawn to the front entrance gates, and come back again.'

'No, I don't think I did, sir.'

'The court will please take note of that answer,' said Mr. Chattaway, who was aware that a great deal had been made of the fact of the housemaid's having seen him go out in the cloak. 'You quitted the window, then, immediately?'

'Pretty near immediately. I don't think I stayed long enough at it for him to come back from the front gates—if he did come. I have never said I did, have I?' she resentfully continued.

'What time was it that you saw him go out?'

'I hadn't took particular notice of the time. It was dusk. I was turning down of my beds; and I generally do that a little afore nine. The next room I went into was Mr. Anthony's.'

'The deceased was in it, was he not?'

'He was in it, a-stretching full length upon the sofa, little thinking, poor fellow, that he'd soon be stretched down below, with a stab gashed into him. He had got his head down on the cushion, and his feet up over the arm at the foot; all comfortable and easy, with a cigar in his mouth, and some glasses and things on the table near him. "What are you come bothering in here for?" he asked. So I begged his pardon; for you see, gentlemen, I didn't know that he was there, and I went out again with my pail, and met Joseph a-carrying up a note to him. A little while after that, he went out.'

The witness's propensity to degenerate into gossip appeared to be great. Several times she was stopped; once by the judge.

'Of how many servants did the household of Mr. Dare consist?' she was asked.

'There were four of us, gentlemen.'

'Did you all sit up that night?'

'All but the cook. She went to bed.'

'And the family, those who were at home, went to bed?'

'All of them, sir. The governess went early; she was not well; and Miss Rosa and Miss Minny went, and the two young gentlemen went when they came home from playing cricket.'

'In point of fact, then, nobody was up but you three servants in the kitchen?'

'Nobody, sir.'

'And you heard no noise in the house until the return of Mr. and Mrs. Dare?'

'We never heard nothing,' responded Betsy. 'We was sitting quiet in the kitchen; me and the lady's-maid, at work, and Joseph asleep. We never heard no noise at all.'

This was the substance of what was asked her. Joseph was next called, and gave his testimony. He deposed to having fastened up the house at eleven o'clock, with the exception of the dining-room window; that was left open in obedience to orders. All other facts within his knowledge he also testified to. The governess, Signora Varsini, was called, and questioned upon two points: what she had seen and heard of the quarrel, and of the subsequent conduct of Anthony and Herbert to each other in the drawing-room. But her testimony amounted to nothing, and she might as well have not been troubled. She was also asked whether she had heard any noise in the house between eleven o'clock and the return of Mr. and Mrs. Dare. She replied that she did not hear any, for she had been asleep. She went to sleep long before eleven, and did not wake up until aroused by the commotion, arising from the finding of the body. The witness was proceeding to favour the court with her own conviction that the prisoner was innocent, but was brought up with a summary notice that that was not evidence, and that, if she knew nothing more, she might withdraw. Upon which she honoured the bench with an elaborate curtsy, and retired. Not a witness throughout the day, gave evidence with more entire equanimity.

Lord Hawkesley was examined; also Mr. Brittle—the latter coming to Helstonleigh on his subpœna. But to give the testimony of all the witnesses in length, would only be to repeat what is already related. It will be sufficient to extract a few questions here and there.

'What were the games played in your rooms that evening?' was asked of Mr. Brittle.

'Some played whist; some écarté.'

'At which did the deceased play?'

'At whist.'

'Was he a loser or a gainer?'

'A loser; but to a very trifling amount. We were playing half-crown points. He and myself played against Lord Hawkesley and Captain Bellow. We broke up because he, the deceased, was not sufficiently sober to play.'

'Was he sober when he joined you?'

'By no means. He appeared to have been drinking rather freely; and he took more at my rooms, which made him worse.'

'Why did you accompany him home?'

'He was scarcely in a fit state to proceed alone; and I felt no objection to a walk. It was a fine night.'

'Did he speak, during the evening, of the dispute which had taken place between him and his brother?' interposed the judge.

'He did not, my lord. A slight incident occurred as we were going to his home, which it may be perhaps as well to mention——'

'You must mention everything which bears upon this unhappy case, sir,' interrupted the judge. 'You are sworn to tell the whole truth.'

'I do not suppose it does bear upon it directly, my lord. Had I attached importance to it, I should have spoken of it before. In passing the turning which leads to the race-course, a man met us, and began to abuse the deceased. The deceased was inclined to stop and return it, but I drew him on.'

'Of what nature was the abuse?' asked the counsel.

'I do not recollect the precise terms. It was to the effect that he, the deceased, tippled away his money, instead of paying his debts. The man put his back against the wall as he spoke; he appeared to have had rather too much himself. I drew the deceased on, and we were soon out of hearing.'

'What became of the man?'

'I do not know. We left him standing against the wall. He called loudly after the deceased to know when his bill was to get paid. I judged him to be some petty tradesman.'

'Did he follow you?'

'No. At least we heard no more of him afterwards. I saw the deceased safely within his own gate, and left him.'

'What state, as to sobriety, was the deceased in then?'

'He was what may be called half-seas over,' replied the witness 'He could talk, but his words were not very distinct.'

'Could he walk alone?'

'After a fashion. He stumbled as he walked.'

'What time was this?'

'About half-past eleven. I think the half-hour struck directly after I left him, but I am not quite sure.'

'As you returned, did you see anything of the man who had accosted the deceased?'

'Not anything.'

Strange to say, the very man thus spoken of, was in court, listening to the trial. Upon hearing this evidence given by Mr. Brittle, he voluntarily put himself forward as a witness. He said he had been 'having a sup,' and it had made his tongue abusive, but that Anthony Dare had owed him money long for work done, mending and making. He was a jobbing tailor, and the bill was a matter of fourteen pounds. Anthony Dare had only put him off and off; he was a poor man, with a wife and family to keep, and he wanted the money badly; but now, he supposed, he should never be paid. He lived close to the spot where he met the deceased and the gentleman who had just given evidence, and he could prove that he went in home as soon as they were out of sight, and was in bed by half-past eleven. What with debts and various other things, he concluded, the town had had enough to rue in young Anthony Dare; still, the poor fellow didn't deserve such a shocking fate as murder; and he would have been the first to protect him from it.

That the evidence was given in good faith, there was no doubt. He was known to the town as a harmless, inoffensive man, addicted, though upon rare occasions, to take more than was good for him, when he was apt to dilate upon his grievances.

The policeman who had been on duty that night near Mr. Dare's residence, was the next witness called.

'Did you see the deceased that night?' was asked of him.

'Yes, sir, I did,' was the reply. 'I saw him walking home with the gentleman who has given evidence—Mr. Brittle. I noticed that young Mr. Dare talked thick, as if he had been drinking.'

'Did they appear to be on good terms?'

'Very good terms, sir. Mr. Brittle was laughing when he opened the gate for the deceased, and told him to mind he did not kiss the grass; or something to that effect.'

'Were you close to them?'

'Quite close, sir. I said "Good-night" to the deceased, but he seemed not to notice it. I stood and watched him over the grass. He reeled as he walked.'

'What time was this?'

'Nigh upon half-past eleven, sir.'

'Did you detect any signs of people moving within the house?'

'Not any, sir. The house seemed quite still, and the blinds were down before the windows.'

'Did you see any one enter the gate that night, besides the deceased?'

'Not any one.'

'Not the prisoner?'

'Not any one,' repeated the policeman.

'Did you see anything of the prisoner, later' between half-past one and two, the time he alleges as that of his going home?'

'I never saw the prisoner at all that night, sir.'

'He could have gone in, as he states, without your seeing him?' interposed the prisoner's counsel.

'Yes, certainly, a dozen times over. My beat extended to half-a-mile beyond Mr. Dare's.'

One witness who was placed in the box, created a profound sensation; for it was the unhappy father, Anthony Dare. Since the deed was committed, two months back, Mr. Dare had been growing old. His brow was furrowed, his cheeks were wrinkled, his hair was turning of a whitish grey, and he looked, as he obeyed the call to the witness-box, like a man sinking under a heavy weight of care. Many of the countenances present expressed deep commiseration for him.

He was sworn, and various questions were asked him. Amongst others, whether he knew anything of the quarrel which had taken place between his two sons.

'Personally, nothing,' was the reply. 'I was not at home.'

'It has been testified that when they were parted, your son Herbert threatened his brother. Is he of a revengeful disposition?'

'No,' replied Mr. Dare, with emotion; 'that, I can truly say, he is not. My poor son, Anthony, was somewhat given to sullenness, but Herbert never was.'

'There had been a great deal of ill-feeling between them of late, I believe.'

'I fear there had been.'

'It is stated that you yourself, upon leaving home that evening, left them a warning not to quarrel. Was it so?'

'I believe I did. Anthony entered the house as we were leaving it, and I did say something to him to that effect.'

'Herbert, the prisoner, was not present?'

'No. He had not returned.'

'It is proved that he came home later, dined, and went out again at dusk. It does not appear that he was seen afterwards by any member of your household, until you yourself went up to his chamber and found them there, subsequent to the discovery of the body. His own account is, that he had but recently returned. Do you know where he was during his absence?'

'No.'

'Or where he went to?'

'No,' repeated the witness, in a sadly faltering tone, for he knew that this was the one weak point in the defence.

'He will not tell you?'

'He declines to do so. But, the witness added, with emotion, 'he has denied his guilt to me from the first, in the most decisive manner: and I solemnly believe him to be innocent. Why he will not state where he was, I cannot conceive; but not a shade of doubt rests upon my mind that he could state it, if he chose, and that it would be the means of establishing the fact of his absence.' I would not assert this, if I did not believe it,' said the witness, raising his trembling hand. 'They were both my boys; the one destroyed was my eldest, perhaps my dearest; and I declare that I would not, knowingly, screen his assassin, although that assassin were his brother.'

The case for the prosecution concluded, and the defence was entered upon. The prisoner's counsel—two of them eminent men, Mr. Chattaway himself being no secondary light in the forensic world—laboured under one disadvantage, as it appeared to the crowded court. They exerted all their shrewd eloquence in seeking to divert the guilt from the prisoner: but they could not—distort facts as they might, call upon imagination as they would—they could not conjure up the ghost of any other channel to which to direct suspicion. There lay the staggering point, as it had lain throughout. If Herbert Dare was not guilty, who was? The family, quietly sleeping in their beds, were beyond the pale of suspicion; the household equally so; and no trace of any midnight intruder to the house could be found. It was a grave stumbling block for the prisoner's counsel; but such stumbling blocks are as nothing to an expert pleader. Bit by bit Mr. Chattaway disposed, or seemed to dispose, of every argument that could tell against the prisoner. The presence of the cloak in the dining room, from which so much appearance of guilt had been deduced, he converted into a negative proof of innocence. 'Had he been the one engaged in the struggle,' argued the learned Q. C., 'would he have been mad enough to leave his own cloak there, underneath his victim, a damning proof of guilt? No! that, at any rate, he would have conveyed away. The very fact of the cloak being underneath the murdered man was a most indisputable proof, as he regarded it, that the prisoner remained totally ignorant of what had happened—ignorant of his unfortunate brother's being at all in the dining-room. Why! had he only surmised his brother was lying, wounded or dead, in the room, would he not have hastened to remove his cloak out of it, before it should be seen there, knowing, as he must know, that, from the very terms on which he and his brother had been, it would be looked upon as a proof of his guilt?' The argument told well with the jury—probably with the judge.

Bit by bit, so did he thus dispose of the suspicious circumstances: of all, save one. And that was the great one, the one that nobody could get over; the refusal of the prisoner to state where he was that night. 'All in good time, gentlemen of the jury,' said Mr. Chattaway, some murmured words reaching his ear that the omission was deemed an ominous one. 'I am coming to that later; and I shall prove as complete and distinct an *alibi* as it was ever my lot to submit to an enlightened court.'

The court listened, the jury listened, the spectators listened, and 'hoped he might.' He had spoken, for the most part, to incredulous ears.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WITNESSES FOR THE ALIBI.

When the speech of counsel ended, and the time came for the production of the witnesses who were to prove the *alibi*, there appeared to be some delay. The intense heat of the court had been growing greater with every hour. The beams of the afternoon sun, now sinking lower and lower in the heavens, had only brought a more deadly feeling of suffocation. But, to go out to get a breath of air, even had the thronged state of the passages allowed the movement, appeared to enter into nobody's thoughts. Their suspense was too keen, their interest too absorbing. Who were those mysterious witnesses, that would testify to the innocence of Herbert Dare?

A stir at the extreme end of the court, where it joined the outer passage. Every eye was strained to see, every ear to listen, as an usher came clearing the way. 'By your leave there—by your leave; room for a witness!'

The spectators looked, and stretched their necks, and looked again. A few among them experienced a strange thrill of disappointment, and felt that they should have much pleasure at being allowed the privilege of boxing the usher's ears, for he preceded nobody more important than Richard Winthorne, the lawyer. Ah, but wait a bit! What short and slight figure is it that Mr. Winthorne is guiding along? The angry crowd have not caught sight of her yet.

But, when they do—when the drooping, shrinking form is at length in the witness-box; her eyes never raised, her lovely face bent in timid dread—then a murmur arises, and shakes the court to its foundation. The judge feels for his glasses—rarely used—and puts them across his nose, and gazes at her. A fair girl, attired in the simple, modest garb, peculiar to the sect called Quakers, not more modest than the lovely and gentle face. She does not take the oath, only the affirmative peculiar to her people.

'What is your name?' commenced the prisoner's counsel.

That she spoke words in reply, was evident, by the moving of her lips; but they could not be heard.

'You must speak up,' interposed the judge, in a tone of kindness.

A deep gasping for breath, an effort that even those around could see its pain, and the answer came. 'They call me Anna. I am the daughter of Samuel Lynn.'

'Where do you live?'

'I live with my father and Patience, in the London Road.'

'What do you know of the prisoner at the bar?'

A pause. She probably did not understand the sort of answer required. One came that was unexpected.

'I know him to be innocent of the crime of which he is accused.'

'How do you know this?'

'Because he could not have been near the spot at the time.'

'Where was he then?'

'With me.'

But the reply came forth in so faint a whisper, that again she had to be enjoined to speak louder, and she repeated it, using different words.

'He was at our house.'

'At what hour did he go to your house?'

'It was past nine when he came up first.'

'And what time did he leave?'

'It was about one in the morning.'

The answer appeared to create some stir. A late hour for a sober little Quakeress to confess to.

'Was he spending the evening with your friends?'

'No.'

'Did they not know he was there?'

'No.'

'It was a clandestine visit to yourself, then? Where were they?'

A pause; and a very trembling answer. 'They were in bed.'

'Oh! You were entertaining him by yourself, then?'

She burst into tears. The judge let fall his glasses, as though under the pressure of some annoyance, every feature of his fine face expressive of compassion; it may be, his thoughts had flown to daughters of his own. The crowd stood with open mouths, gaping with undisguised astonishment, and the burly Queen's counsel proceeded.

'And so he prolonged his visit until one o'clock in the morning?'

'I was locked out,' she sobbed. 'That is how he came to stay so late.'

Bit by bit, what with questioning and cross-questioning, it all came out: that Herbert Dare had been in the habit of paying stolen visits to the field, and that Anna had been in the habit of meeting him there. That she had gone in home on this night just before ten, which was later than she had ever stayed out before; but, finding Hester had to go out to get the medicine for Patience, she had run to the field again to take a book to the prisoner; and that upon attempting to enter, soon afterwards, she found the door locked, Hester having met the doctor's boy, and come back at once. She told it all, as simply and guilelessly as a child.

'What were you doing all that while? From ten o'clock until one in the morning?'

'I was sitting on the door step, crying.'

'Was the prisoner with you?'

'Yes. He stood by me part of the time, telling me not to be afraid; and the rest of the time—more than an hour, I think—he was working at the wires of the pantry window, to try to get in.'

'Was he all that while at the wires?'

'It was a long while before I remembered the pantry window. He wanted to knock up Hester, but I was afraid to let him. I feared she might tell Patience, and they would have been so angry with me. He got in, at last, at the pantry window, and he opened the kitchen window for me, and I went in by it.'

'And you mean to say he was all that while, till one o'clock in the morning, forcing the wires of a pantry window?' cried Sergeant Seeitall.

'It was nearly one. I am telling thee the truth.'

'And you did not lose sight of the prisoner from the time he first came to the field, at nine o'clock, until he left you at one.'

'Only for the few minutes—it may have been four or five—when I ran in and came out again with the book. He waited in the field.'

'What time was that?'

'The ten o'clock bell was going in Helstonleigh. We could hear it.'

'He was with you all the rest of the time?'

'Yes, all. When he was working at the pantry window I could not see him, because he was round the angle of the house. Not a minute of the time but I heard him. He was more than an hour at the wires, as I have told thee.'

'And until he began at the wires?'

'He was standing up by me, telling me not to be afraid.'

'All the time. You affirm this.'

'I am affirming all that I say to thee. I am speaking as before my Maker.'

'Don't you think it is a pretty confession for a young lady to make?'

She burst into fresh tears. The judge turned his grave face upon Sergeant Seeitall. But the Sergeant had impudence enough for ten.

'Pray, how many times had that pretty little midnight drama been enacted?' he continued, while Anna sobbed in distress.

'Never before,' burst forth a deep voice. 'Don't you see it was a pure accident, as she tells you? How dare you treat her as you might a shameless witness?'

The interruption—one of powerful emotion—had come from the prisoner. At the sound of his voice, Anna started, and looked round hurriedly to the quarter whence it came. It was the first time she had raised her eyes to the court since entering the witness-box. She had glanced up to answer whoever questioned her, and that was all.

'Well?' said Sergeant Seeitall, as if demanding what else she might have to communicate.

'I have no more to tell. I have told thee all I know. It was nearly one o'clock when he went away, and I never saw him after.'

'Did the prisoner wear a cloak when he came to the field that night?'

'No. He wore one sometimes, but he did not have it on that night. It was very warm——'

But, at that moment, Anna Lynn became conscious that a familiar face was strained upon her from the midst of the crowd: familiar, and yet not familiar; for the face was distorted from its natural look, and was blanched, as of one in the last agony—the face of Samuel Lynn. With a sharp cry of pain—of dread—Anna fell on the floor in a fainting fit. What the shame of being before that public court, of answering the searching questions of the counsel, had failed to take away—her senses—the sight of her father, cognizant of her disgrace, had effected. Surely it was a disgrace for a young and guileless maiden to have to confess to such an escapade—an escapade that sounded worse to censuring ears than it had been in reality. Anna fainted. Mr. Winthorne stepped forward, and she was borne out.

Another Quakeress was now put into the witness-box, and the court looked upon a little, middle-aged woman, whose face was sallow, and who showed her decayed teeth as she spoke. It was Hester Dell. She wore a brown silk bonnet, lined with white, and a fawn-coloured shawl. She was told that she must state what she knew, relative to the visit of Herbert Dare, that night.

'I went to rest at my usual hour, or, maybe, a trifle later, for I had waited for the arrival of

some physic, never supposing but that the child, Anna, had gone to her room before me, and was safe in bed. I had been asleep some considerable time, as it seemed, when I was awakened by what sounded like the raising of the kitchen window underneath. I sat up in bed and listened, and was convinced that the window was being raised slowly and cautiously, as if the raiser did not want it to be heard. I was considerably startled, the more so as I knew I had left the window fastened; and my thoughts turned to housebreakers. While I deliberated what to do, seeing I was but a lone woman in the house, save for the child Anna, and Patience who was disabled in her bed, I heard what appeared to be the voice of the child, and it sounded in the yard. I went to my window, but I could not see anything, it being right over the kitchen, and I not daring to open it. But I still heard Anna's voice: she was speaking in a low tone, and I believed I caught other tones also—those of a man. I thought I must be asleep and dreaming; next I thought that it must be young Gar from the next door, Jane Halliburton's son. Her other sons I knew to be not at home; the one being abroad, the other at the University of Oxford. I deliberated could anything be the matter at their house, and the boy have come for help. Then I reflected that that was most unlikely, for why should he be stealthily opening the kitchen window, and why should Anna be whispering with him? In short, to tell thee the truth'—raising her eyes to the judge, whom she appeared to address, to the ignoring of everybody else—'I did not know what to think, and I grew more disturbed. I quietly put on a few things, and went softly down the stairs, deeming it well, for my own sake, to feel my way, as it were, and not to run headlong into danger. I stood a moment at the kitchen door, listening; and there I distinctly heard Anna laugh—a little, gentle laugh. It reassured me, though I was still puzzled; and I opened the door at once.'

Here the witness made a dead pause.

'What did you see when you opened the door?' asked the judge.

'I would not tell thee, but that I am bound to tell thee,' she frankly answered. 'I saw the prisoner, Herbert Dare. He appeared to have been laughing with Anna, who stood near him, and he was preparing to get out at the window as I entered.'

'Well? what next?' inquired the counsel, in an impatient tone; for Hester had stopped again.

'I can hardly tell what next,' replied the witness. 'Looking back, it appears nothing but confusion in my mind. It seemed nothing but confusion at the time. Anna cried out, and hid her face in fear; and the prisoner attempted some explanation, which I would not listen to. To see a son of Anthony Dare's in the house with the child at that midnight hour, filled me with anger and bewilderment. I ordered him away; I believe I pushed him through the window; I threatened to call in the policeman. Finally, he went away.'

'Saying nothing?'

'I tell you all, I would not listen to it. I remembered scraps of what he said afterwards. That Anna was not to blame—that I had no cause to scold her or to acquaint Patience with what had happened—that the fault, if there was any fault, was mine, for locking the back door so quickly. I refused to hear farther, and he departed, saying he would explain when I was less fierce. That is all I saw of him.'

'Did you mention this affair to any one?' asked the counsel for the prosecution.

'No.'

'Why not?'

'The child clung about me in tears after he was gone, giving me the explanation that I would not hear from him, and beseeching me not to acquaint Patience. She told me how it had happened. That upon my going out to see after the sleeping-draught for Patience, she had taken the opportunity to run to the field with a book, where Herbert Dare waited; and that upon attempting to come in again, she found the door locked.'

'You returned sooner than she expected?'

'Yes. I met the doctor's boy near the house, bringing the physic, and I took it from him and went home again directly. Not seeing Anna about, I never thought but that she had retired to bed. I went up also, trying the back door as I passed it, which to my surprise I found unfastened.'

'Why to your surprise?'

'Because I had, as I believed, previously turned the key of it. Finding it unlocked, I concluded I must have been mistaken. Afterwards, when the explanation came, I learnt that Anna had undone it. She clung about me, as I tell thee, sobbing and crying, saying, as he had said, there was no cause to be angry with her; that she could not help what had happened; and that she had sat crying on the door-step the whole of the time, until he had effected an entrance for her. I went to the pantry window, and saw where the wires had been torn away, not roughly, but neatly; and I knew it must have taken a long while to accomplish. I fell in with the child's prayer, and did not speak of what had occurred, not even to Patience. This is the first time it has escaped my lips.'

'So you deemed it desirable to conceal such an

adventure, and give the prisoner opportunity to renew his midnight visits?' retorted the prosecuting counsel.

'What was done could not be undone,' said the witness. 'I was willing to spare the scandal to the child, and not be the means of spreading it abroad. While I was deliberating whether to tell Patience, seeing she was in so suffering a state, news came that Herbert Dare was a prisoner. He had been arrested the following morning, on the accusation of murdering his brother, and I knew that he was safe for several weeks to come. Hence I held my tongue.'

The witness had given her evidence in a clear, straightforward, uncompromising manner, widely at variance with the distressed timidity of Anna. Not a shade of doubt rested on the mind of any person in court that both had spoken the exact truth. But the counsel seemed inclined to question still.

'Since when did you know you were coming here to give this evidence?'

'Only when I did come. Richard Winthorne, the man of law, came to our house in a fly this afternoon, and brought us away with him. By some remarks he exchanged with Anna, when we were in it, I found that she had known of it this day or two. They feared to avert me, I suppose, lest, maybe, I might refuse to attend.'

'One question more, witness. Did the prisoner wear a cloak that night?'

'No—I did not see any.'

This closed the evidence, and the witness was allowed to withdraw. Richard Winthorne went in search of Samuel Lynn, and found him seated on a bench in the outer hall, surrounded by gentlemen of his persuasion, many of them of high standing in Helstonleigh. Tales of marvel, you know, never lose anything in spreading; neither are people given to place a light construction on public gossip, when they can, by any stretch of imagination, place a dark one. In this affair, however, no very great stretch was required. The town jumped to the charitable conclusion that Anna Lynn must be one of the naughtiest girls under the sun; imprudent, ungrateful, disobedient; I don't know what else; had she been guilty of scattering poison in Atterly's field, and so killed all the lambs, they could not have said or thought worse. All joined in it, charitable and uncharitable; all sorts of ill notions were spread, and got taken up. Herbert Dare, you may be very sure, came in for his share.

The news had been taken to Mr. Ashley's manufactory, sent by the astounded Patience, that Richard Winthorne had come and taken away Anna and Hester Dell to give testimony on the trial of Herbert Dare. The Quaker, perplexed and wondering, believed Patience must be demented; that the message could have no foundation in truth. Nevertheless, he bent his steps to the Guildhall, accompanied by William Halliburton, and was witness to the evidence. He, strict and sober-minded, was not likely to take up a more favourable construction of the facts generally, than the town was taking up. It may be guessed what it was for him.

He sat now on a bench in the outer hall, surrounded by friends, who, on hearing the crying scandal whispered, touching a young member of their body, had come flocking down to the Guildhall. When they spoke to him, he did not appear to hear; he sat with his hands on his knees, and his head sunk on his breast, never raising it. Richard Winthorne approached him.

'Miss Lynn and her servant will not be wanted again,' said the lawyer. 'I have sent for a fly.'

The fly came. Anna was placed in it by Mr. Winthorne; Hester Dell followed; and Samuel Lynn came forward and stumbled into it. Stumbled! It is the proper word, he appeared to have no power left to pick his legs up.

'Thou wilt not be harsh with her, Samuel,' whispered an influential Friend, who had a kind, benevolent countenance. 'Some of us will confer with thee to-morrow; but meanwhile, do not be harsh with her. Thou wilt call to mind that she is thy child, and motherless.'

Samuel Lynn made no reply. He did not appear to hear. He sat opposite his daughter, his eyes never lifted, and his face assuming a leaden, ghastly hue. Hester suddenly leaned from the door, and beckoned to William Halliburton.

'Will thee please be so obliging as to go up with us in the fly?' she said in his ear. 'I do not like his look.'

William stepped in, and the fly was driven away with closed blinds, to the intense chagrin of the curious mob. Before it was out of the town, William and Hester, with a simultaneous movement, canght hold of the Quaker. Anna screamed.

'What is it?' she uttered, terrified at the sight of his drawn, contorted face.

'It is thy work,' said Hester, less placidly than she would have spoken in a calmer moment. 'If thee hast saved the life of thy friend, Herbert Dare, thee hast probably destroyed that of thy father.'

They were close to the residence of Mr. Parry, and William ordered the fly to stop. The surgeon was at home, and took William's place in it. Samuel Lynn had been struck with paralysis.

William was at the house before they were,

preparing Patience. Patience was so far restored to health herself as to be able to walk about a little; she was very lame yet.

They carried Mr. Lynn to his room. Anna in her humiliation and shame—the having to give evidence, and such evidence, in the face of that public court, had been nothing less to her—flew to her own chamber, and flung herself, dressed as she was, on the carpet, in desperate abandonment. William saw her there as he passed it from her father's room. There was nobody to attend to her, for they were occupied with Mr. Lynn. It was no moment for ceremony, and William entered and attempted to raise her.

'Let me be, William—let me be. I only want to die.'

'Anna, child, this will not mend the past. Do not give way like this.'

But she resolutely turned from him, sobbing more loudly, 'Only to die—only to die!'

William went for his mother, and gave her the outline of the tale, asking her to go into the house of distress, and see what could be done. Jane, in her utter astonishment, sought farther explanation. She could not understand him in the least.

'I assure you, I understand it nearly as little,' replied William. 'Anna was locked out through some mistake of Hester's, it appears, and Herbert Dare stayed with her. That it will be the means of acquitting him, there is no doubt; but Helstonleigh is making its comments freely.'

Jane went in, her senses in a maze. She found Patience in a state not to be described; she found Anna where William had left her, reiterating the same cry, 'Oh, that I were dead—that I were dead!'

Meanwhile the trial at the Guildhall was drawing to its close, and the judge proceeded to sum up. Not with the frantic bursts of oratory pertaining to those eloquent gentlemen, the counsel, but in a calm tone of dispassionate reasoning. He placed the facts concisely before the jury, not speaking in favour of the prisoner, but candidly avowing that he did not see how they could get over the evidence of the prisoner's witnesses, the young Quaker lady and her maid. If that was to be believed—and for himself he fully believed it—then the prisoner could not have been guilty of the murder, and was clearly entitled to an acquittal. It was six o'clock when the jury retired to deliberate.

The judge, the bar, the spectators, sat on, or stood, with what patience they might, in the crowded and heated court. On the fiat of those twelve men hung the life of the prisoner; whether he was to be discharged an innocent man, or hung as a guilty one. Reposing in the pocket of Sir William Leader was a certain little cap, black in colour, innocuous in itself, but of awful significance when brought forth by the hand of the presiding judge. Was it destined to be brought forth that night?

The jury were coming in at last. Only an hour had they remained in deliberation, for seven o'clock was booming out over the town. It had seemed to the impatient spectators more than two. What must it have seemed to the prisoner? They ranged themselves in their box, and the crier proclaimed silence.

'Have you agreed upon your verdict, gentlemen of the jury?'

'We have.'

'How say you, gentlemen, guilty or not guilty?'

The foreman advanced an imperceptible step, and looked at the judge, speaking deliberately—

'My lord, we find him Not guilty.'

CHAPTER XX.

A COUCH OF PAIN.

'William, I have got my death-blow! I have got my death-blow!'

The speaker was Henry Ashley. Four days had elapsed subsequent to the trial of Herbert Dare, and William Halliburton saw him now for the first time since that event. What with mind and body, Henry was in a grievous state of pain; all William's compassion was called forth, as he leaned over his couch.

It has been hinted that Helstonleigh, in its charity, took up the very worst view of the case that could be taken up, with regard to Anna Lynn. Had she gone about with a blazing torch and set all the houses on fire, their inhabitants could not have mounted themselves on higher stilts. Somehow, *everybody* took it up. It was like those apparently well-authenticated political reports that arrive now and then by telegram, driving the Stock Exchange, or the Paris Bourse, into a state of mad belief. Nobody *thought* to doubt it; people caught up the notion from one another as they catch a fever. If even Samuel Lynn had looked upon it in the worst light, bringing to him paralysis, little chance was there that others might gaze through a brighter glass. It had half killed Henry Ashley; and the words were not, in point of fact, so wild as they sounded. 'I have got my death-blow! I have got my death-blow!'

'No, you have not,' was William's answer. 'It

is a blow—I know it—but not one that you can not outlive.'

'Why did you not come to me? Four whole days, and you have never been near the house!'

'Because I feared that you would be putting yourself into the state of agitation that you are now doing,' replied William, candidly. Mr. Ashley said to me on the Wednesday, "Henry has one of his bad attacks again." I knew it to be more the mind than the body, this time, and I deemed it well that you should be left in quiet. There's nobody you can talk of it to, but me.'

'Your staying away has not served your purpose, then. My father came to me with the details, thinking to divert me for a moment from my bodily pain; never supposing that each word was as a dagger plunged into my very being. My mother came, with this scrap of news, or the other scrap. Mary came, wondering and eager, asking information at second-hand; mamma was mysterious over it, and would not tell her. Mary cannot credit ill of Anna; she has as great a trust in her still as I had. As I had! Oh, William! she was my object in life! She was all my future—my world—my heaven!'

'Now you know you will suffer for this excitement,' cried William, almost as he would have said it to a wayward child.

He might as well have talked to the wind. Henry neither heard nor heeded him. He continued, his manner as full of agitation as his mind—

'I am not as other men. You can go forth, all of you, into the world, to pursue your pleasures, your amusements. I am confined here. But what mattered it? Did I envy you? No. While I had her to think of, I was happier than you.'

'Had this not happened, it might have gone cross for you in some other way, and so have come to the same.'

'And now it is over,' reiterated Henry, paying no attention to the remark. 'It is over, and gone; and I—I wish, William, I had gone with it.'

'I wish you would be reasonable.'

'Don't preach. You active men, with your multifarious objects and interests in life, cannot know what it is for one like me, shut out from the world, to *love*. I tell you, William, it was literally my life; the core of my life; my all. I am not sure but I have been mad ever since.'

'I am not sure but you are mad now,' returned William, believing that to humour him might be the worst plan he could adopt.

'I dare say I am,' was the unsatisfactory answer. 'Four days, and I have had to bury it all within me! I could not wail it out to my own pillow at night; for they concluded it was one of my bad attacks, and old nurse was posted in the bed in the next room with the door open. There's nobody I can rave myself out to but you, and you must let me do it, unless you would have me go quite mad. I hope I shan't be here long to be a trouble to any of you!'

William did not know what to say. He believed there was nothing for it at present but to let him 'rave himself out.' 'But I wish,' he said, aloud, in continuation of the bent of his own thoughts, 'that you would be a little rational over it.'

'Stop a bit. Did you ever experience a blow like this?'

'No, indeed.'

'Then don't hold forth to me, I say. You do not understand. It was all the joy I had on earth.'

'You must learn to find other joys; other——'

'The despicable villain!' broke forth Henry, the heat-drops welling up on his brow, as they had welled up on Anna's when before the judge; 'the shame-faced, cowardly villain! Was she not Samuel Lynn's child, and my sister's friend? What possessed the jury to acquit him? Did they think an end of rope too good for his neck?'

'He was proved innocent of the murder. If he has any conscience——'

'What's that?' fiercely interrupted Henry Ashley. '*He* a conscience! I don't know what you are dreaming of. Is he going to stop in Helstonleigh?'

'I conclude so. He resumed his place quietly in his father's office the day after the trial. He is in London now, but only temporarily.

'Resumed his place quietly. What was the mob about, then?'

The question was put so quaintly, in such confiding simplicity, that a smile rose to William's face. 'In awe of the police, I expect,' he answered. 'The Dares, while his fate was uncertain, have been rusticating in the shade. Cyril told me to-day, that now that the accusation was proved to have been false, they were "coming out" again.'

'Coming out in what? Villainy?'

'He left the "what" to be inferred. In grandeur, I expect. The established innocence of Her——'

'If you apply that word to the man, William Halliburton, you are as black as he is.'

William remembered Henry's tribulation both of mind and body, and went on without the shadow of a retort.

'I apply it to him in relation to the crime of which he was charged. His acquittal and release have caused the Dares to hold up their heads again. But they have lost caste in Helstonleigh.'

'Caste!' was the scornful ejaculation of Henry Ashley. 'They never had any caste to lose. Does the master intend to retain Cyril in the manufactory?'

'I have heard nothing to the contrary. If he retained him while the accusation was hanging over Herbert Dare's head, he will not be likely to discard him now it is removed.'

'Removed!' shrieked Henry. 'If one accusation has been removed, has not a worse taken its place?'

'Would it be just to visit on one brother the sins of another?'

'A nice pair of brothers they are!' cried Henry, in the sharp, petulant manner habitual to him, when racked with pain. 'How will Samuel Lynn like the company of Cyril Dare by his side in the manufactory, when he gets well again?'

William shook his head. The considerations were not for him. They were Mr. Ashley's.

'You heard her give her evidence?' resumed Henry, breaking a pause.

'Most of it.'

'Tell it me.'

'No, Henry; it would not do you good to hear it.'

'Tell it me, I say,' persisted Henry, wilfully. 'I know it in substance. I want to have it repeated over to me, word for word.'

'But——'

Henry suddenly raised his hand and laid it on William's lips, with a warning movement. He turned, and saw Mary Ashley.

'Take her back to the drawing-room, William,' he whispered. 'I can bear nobody but you about me now. Not yet, Mary,' he added aloud, motioning his sister away with his hand. 'Not now.'

Mary halted in indecision. William advanced to her, placed her hand within his arm, and led her, somewhat summarily, from the room.

'I am only obeying orders, Miss Ashley,' said he. 'They are to see you back to the drawing-room.'

'If Henry can bear you with him, he might bear me.'

'You know what his whims and fancies are, when he is suffering.'

'Is there not a particularly good understanding between you and Henry?' she pointedly asked.

'Yes; we understand each other perfectly.'

'Well, then, tell me—what is it that is the matter with him this time? I do not like to say so to mamma, because she might call me fanciful, but it appears to me that Henry's illness is more on the mind than on the body.'

William made no reply.

'And yet, I cannot imagine it possible for Henry to have picked up any annoyance or grief,' resumed Mary. 'How can he have done it? He is not like one who goes out into the world—who has to meet with cares and checks. You do not speak,' she added, looking at William. 'Is it that you will not tell me, or do you know nothing?'

William lowered his voice. 'I can only say that, should there be anything of the sort you mention, the kinder course for Henry—indeed, the only course—will be, not to allow him to perceive that you suspect it. Conceal the suspicion both from him and from others. Remember his excessive sensitiveness. When he sees cause to hide his feelings, it would be almost as death to him to have them penetrated.'

'I think you must be in his full confidence,' observed Mary, looking at William.

'Pretty well so,' he answered, with a passing smile.

'Then, if he has any secret grief, will you try and soothe it to him?'

'With all my best endeavours,' earnestly spoke William. But there was not the least apparent necessity for his taking Mary Ashley's hand between his own, and pressing it there while he said it, any more than there was necessity for that vivid blush of hers, as she turned into the drawing-room.

But you must be anxious to hear of Anna Lynn. Poor Anna! who had fallen so terribly into the bad books of the town, without really much deserving it. It was a most unlucky *contretemps*, the having got locked out; it was a still more unfortunate sequel, the having to confess to it on the public trial. She was not a pattern of goodness, it must be confessed—had not yet attained to be that perfect model, which expects, as of a right, a niche in the mundane saintly calendar. She was reprehensibly vain; she delighted in plaguing Patience; and she took to run out into the field, when it had been far better that she had remained at home. The running out entailed deceit and some stories; but it entailed nothing worse, and Helstonleigh need not have set its severe back up.

Never had there been a more forcible illustration of the old saying, 'Give a dog a bad name, and hang him,' than in this instance. When William Halliburton had told Anna that Herbert Dare was not a good man, that he did not bear a good name, he had told her the strict truth. For that very reason a private intimacy with him was undesirable, however innocent it might be, however innocent it was, in itself; and for that very reason did Helstonleigh look at it through smoky spectacles. Had she been locked out all night, instead of half a one, with somebody in better odour, Helstonleigh had not put up its scornful crest.

Not a soul seemed to cast so much as a good word or a charitable thought to him in the matter Did he deserve none? However thoughtless or reprehensible his conduct was, in drawing Anna into those field promenades, when the explosion came he met it as a gentleman. Many a one, more renowned for the cardinal graces than was Herbert Dare, might have spoken out at once and cleared himself at the expense of making known Anna's unlucky escapade. Not so he. A doubt may have been upon him that, were it betrayed, Helstonleigh might be for casting a taint on her fair name; and he strove to save it. He suffered the brand of murderer to be attached to him—he languished for many weeks in prison as a common criminal—all to save it. He all but went to the scaffold to save it. He might have called Anna and Hester Dell forward at the inquest, at the preliminary examination before the magistrates, and thus have cleared himself; but he would not. While there was a chance of his innocence being brought to light in any other manner, he would not call on Anna. He let the odium settle upon his head; he went to prison hoping that he should be exculpated in some different way. There was a generous, chivalric feeling in this, which Helstonleigh could not understand, when emanating from Herbert Dare, and they declined to give him credit for it. They preferred to look at the affair altogether in a different light, and to lavish hard names upon it. Every soul was alike; there was no exception; Samuel Lynn, and all else in Helstonleigh. They caught the epidemic, I say, from one another.

CHAPTER XXI.

A RAY OF LIGHT.

The first brunt of the edge worn off, Anna grew cross She did not see why everybody should be blaming her. What had so sadly prostrated herself was the shame of having to appear before the public court; to stand in it and give her evidence. The excitement, the shame, combined with the terrifying illness of her father, brought on, as Hester told her, through her, had sent her into a wild state of contrition and alarm. Little wonder that she wished herself dead.

She sat, for the most part, in her father's room, never moving from his bedside, unless disturbed from it; never speaking; eating only when food was put before her. Anna was in grievous fear lest a public reprimand should be in store for her, delivered at meeting on First Day; but she saw no reason why everybody should continue cross with her at home.

She happened to be alone with her father when he first recovered consciousness. Some fifteen days had elapsed since the trial. But for the fact of her being with him, a difficulty might have been experienced to get her there. She dreaded his anger, his reproach, more than anything. So long as he lay without his senses, knowing her not, so long was she content to sit, watching. She was seated by the bedside, in her usual listless attitude, her head and her eyes cast down, when her father's hand, not the one affected, was suddenly lifted, and laid upon her's, which rested on the counterpane. Startled, Anna turned her gaze upon him, and she saw that his intellects were restored. With a suppressed cry of dismay, she would have flown away, but he clasped his fingers round hers.

'Anna!'

She sunk down on her knees, shaking as if in an ague fit, and buried her face in the clothes. Samuel Lynn stretched forth his hand and put it on her head.

'Thou art my own child, Anna; thy mother left thee to me for good and for ill; and I will stand by thee in thy sorrow.'

She burst into a storm of hysterical tears. He let it have its course; he drew her wet face to his, and kissed it; he talked to her soothingly, never speaking a single word of reproach; and Anna overgot her fear and her sobs. She knelt down by the bed still, and let her cheek rest on the counterpane.

'It has nearly killed me,' he murmured, after a while. 'But I pray for life; I will struggle hard to live, that thee may'st have one protector. Friends and foes may cast reproach to thee, but I will not.'

'Why should *they* cast reproach to me, father?' returned Anna, with a little spice of resentment. 'I have not harmed them.'

'No, child, thee hast not; only thyself. I will help thee to bear the reproach. Thou art my own child.'

'But there's nothing for them to reproach me with,' she reiterated, her face pushed deeper into the counterpane. 'It was not pleasant to stand there—but it is over. And they need not reflect upon me for it.'

'What is over? To stand where?' he asked.

'At the Guildhall, on the trial.'

'It is not *that* that people will reproach thee with, Anna. It was not a nice thing for thee; but that, in itself, brings no reproach.'

Anna lifted her head wonderingly.

'What does, then?' she uttered.

He did not answer. He only closed his eyes, a deep groan bursting from the very depths of his heart. It came into Anna's mind that he must be thinking of her previous acquaintance with Herbert Dare; of her stolen promenades in the field by twilight.

'Oh, father, don't thee be angry with me?' she implored, the tears streaming down from her eyes. 'It was no harm; it was not, indeed. Thee might have been present always, for all the harm there was, and I wish thee had been. Why should thee think anger of it? There was no more harm in my talking with him now and then in the field, than there was in my talking with him in Margaret Ashley's sitting-room.'

Something in the simple words, in the tone, in the manner altogether, caused the Quaker's heart to leap within him. Had he been making a molehill into a mountain? Surely, yes! But what else he would have said or done, what questions asked, cannot be known, for they were interrupted by a visit from William Halliburton. Anna stole away.

William was full of hearty congratulation on the visible improvement—the, so far, restoration to health. The Quaker murmured some half-inarticulate words, indicating something to the effect that he might not have been ill, but for taking up a worse view of the case than, as he believed now, it really merited.

William leaned over him; a glad look in his eye; a glad sound in his low voice.

'My mother has been telling Patience so to-day. She, my mother, is convinced now that very exaggerated blame was cast to Anna. It was foolish of her, of course, to fall into the habit of running to the field; but the locking out might have happened to any one. My mother told me this, not half-an-hour ago. She has seen and talked to Anna frequently this last day or two, and has drawn her own positive deductions My mother is vexed with herself for having fallen into the popular blame.'

'Ay!' uttered Samuel Lynn. 'There is blame abroad, then? I thought there was.'

'People will come to their senses in good time,' was William's answer. 'Never doubt it.'

The Quaker raised his feeble hand, and laid it upon William's.

'The Ashley's—have *they* blamed?'

'I fear they have,' was the only reply he could make, in his strict truth.

'Then, William, thee go to them. Go to them now, and set them right.'

He was already going, for he was engaged to the Ashleys that evening. Between Henry Ashley, the men at East's, and his own studies, which he would not wholly neglect, William's evenings had a tolerably busy time of it. He had assumed Samuel Lynn's place in the manufactory by Mr. Ashley's orders, head of all things, under the master. Cyril ground his teeth at this; he looked upon it as a slight to himself; but Cyril had no power to alter it.

William found Mr. and Mrs. Ashley alone. Mary was out. He sat with them a few minutes, talking of Anna, and then rose to go to the chamber of Henry.

'How is he this evening?' he inquired.

'Ill and very fractious,' was the reply of Mr. Ashley 'William, you have great influence over him. I wish you could persuade him to *give way* less. He is not ill enough, so far as we can see, to keep his room; but we cannot get him out of it.'

Henry was in one of his depressed moods, excessively dispirited and irritable.

'Oh, so you have come!' he burst forth as William entered. 'I should be ashamed to neglect a sick fellow as you neglect me. If I were well and strong, and you ill, you would find it different.'

'I know I am late,' acknowledged William. 'Samuel Lynn took up a little of my time, and I have been sitting some minutes in the drawing-room'

'Of course?' was the fractious answer. 'Anybody before me.'

'Samuel Lynn is a great deal better,' continued William. 'His mind is restored'

Henry received the news ungraciously, making no rejoinder; but his side was twitching with pain. 'How is *she?*' he asked. 'Is the shame fretting out her life?'

'Not at all. She is very well. As to shame—as you call it—I believe she has not taken much to herself.'

'It will kill her: you'll see. The sooner the better for her, I should say.'

William sat down on the edge of the sofa, on which the invalid was lying. 'Henry, I'd set you right upon a point, if I thought it would be expedient You do go into fits of excitement so great, that it is dangerous to speak.'

'Tell out anything you have to tell. Tell me, if you choose, that the house is on fire, and I must be pitched out of the window to escape it. It would make no impression upon me. My fits of excitement have passed away with Anna Lynn.'

'My news relates to Anna.'

'What if it does? She has passed away *for me.*'

'Helstonleigh, in its usual hasty fashion of jumping to conclusions, has jumped to a false one,' continued William. 'There has been no grounds for the great blame cast to Anna: except in the minds of a charitable public.'

'A fact?' asked Henry, after a pause.

'There's not a shade of doubt of it.'

He received the answer with equanimity; it may be said, with apathy. And turning on his couch, he drew the coverlid over him, repeating the words previously spoken: 'She has passed away for me.'

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. DELVES DOWN ON HIS BEAM ENDS.

Samuel Lynn grew better, and Mr. Ashley, in his considerate kindness, proposed that he should reside abroad for a few months in the neighbourhood of Annonay, to watch the skin market, and pick up skins that would be suitable for their use Anna and Patience were to accompany him. Anna had somewhat regained her footing in the good graces of the gossippers. That she did so, was partly owing to the indignant defence of her entered upon by Herbert Dare. Herbert did behave well in this case, and he must have his due Upon his return from London, whither he had gone soon after the termination of the trial, remaining away a week or two, he found what a very charitable ovation Helstonleigh was bestowing upon Anna Lynn. He met it with a storm of indignation; he bade them think as bad of him as they chose; believe him a second Burke if they liked; but to keep their mistaken tongues off Anna. What with one thing and another, some of the scandal-mongers did begin to think they had been too hasty, and withdrew their censure. Some (as a matter of course,) preferred to doubt still; and opinions remained divided.

Helstonleigh took up the gossip on another score—that of Mr. Ashley's sending Samuel Lynn abroad, as his skin buyer, for an indefinite period. 'A famous trade Ashley must have, to go to that expense!' grumbled some of the envious manufacturers. True; he *had* a famous trade. And if he had not had one, he might have sent him all the same. Helstonleigh never knew the considerate benevolence of heart of Thomas Ashley. The journey was fully decided upon; and Samuel Lynn had an application from a member of his own persuasion, to rent his house, furnished, for the term of his absence. He was glad to accept the accommodation.

But, before Mr. Lynn and his family started, Helstonleigh was fated to sustain another loss, in the person of Herbert Dare. Herbert contrived to get some sort of a mission intrusted to him abroad, and he made rather a summary exit from Helstonleigh, to enter upon it. A friend of Herbert's, who had gone over to live in Holland, and with whom he was in frequent correspondence, wrote and offered him a situation in a merchant's house in Rotterdam, as 'English clerk.' The offer came in answer to a hint, or perhaps more than a hint, from Herbert, that a year or two's sojourn abroad would be acceptable. He'd get a good salary, if he proved himself equal to the duties, the information stated, and might rise in it, if he chose to stop. Herbert wrote, off-hand, to secure it, and then told his father what he had done.

'Go into a house at Rotterdam, as English clerk!' repeated Mr. Dare, unable to credit his own ears. '*You* a clerk!'

'What am I to do?' asked Herbert. 'Since I came out of there,' turning his thumb in the direction of the county prison, 'claims have thickened upon me. I do owe a great deal, and that's a fact—what with my own scores, and that for which I am liable for—for poor Anthony. People won't wait much longer; and I have no fancy to try the debtor side of the prison.'

They were standing in the front room of the office. Mr. Dare's business appeared to be considerably falling off, and the office had often leisure on its hands now. Of the two clerks kept, one had holiday, the other was out. Somehow, what with one untoward thing and another, people were growing shy of the Dares. Mr. Dare leaned against the corner of the window-frame, watching the passers-by, his hands in his pockets, and a blank look on his face.

'You say you can't help me, sir,' Herbert continued.

'You know I can't; sufficiently to do any good,' returned Mr. Dare. 'I am too much pressed for money myself. Look at the expnses attending the trial; and I was embarrassed enough before. I *cannot* help you.'

'It seems to me, too, that you want me gone from here.'

'I have not said so,' curtly responded Mr. Dare.

'You told me the other day that it was my presence in the office which scared clients from it.'

Mr. Dare could not deny the fact. He *had* said it. What's more, he had thought it, and did still. 'I cannot tell what else it is that is keeping clients away,' he rejoined. 'We have not had a dozen in since the trial.'

'It is a slack season of the year.'

'Maybe,' shortly answered Mr. Dare. 'Slack as it is, there's some business astir, but people are going elsewhere to get it done; those, too,

who have never, for years, been near anybody but us. The truth is, Herbert, you fell into bad odour with the town on the day of the trial; and that you must know. Though acquitted of the murder, all sorts of other things were laid to your charge, Quaker Lynn's stroke amongst the rest.'

'Carping sinners!' ejaculated Herbert.

'And I suppose it turned people against the office,' continued Mr. Dare. 'My belief is, they won't come back again as long as you are in it.'

'That's precisely what I meant you had hinted to me,' said Herbert. 'Therefore, I thought I had better leave it. Pattison says he can get me this berth, and I should like to try it.'

'*You'll* not like to turn merchant's clerk,' repeated Mr. Dare, with emphasis.

'I shall like it better than being nailed for debt here,' somewhat coarsely answered Herbert. 'It is not so agreeable at home now, especially in this office, that I should cry to stay in it. You have changed, sir, amongst the rest, many a day through, you don't give me a civil word.'

Again Mr Dare felt that he *had* changed to Herbert. When he found that he—Herbert—might have cleared himself at first from the terrible accusation of fratricide, had he so chosen, instead of allowing the obloquy to rest upon himself and his family for so long a period of time, he had become bitterly angry. Mrs Dare and the whole family joined in the feeling, and Herbert suffered.

'As to civility, Herbert, I must overget the soreness left by your conduct first. You acted very ill in allowing the case to go on to trial. If you had no objection to sit down quietly under the crime yourself, you had no right to throw the disgrace and the expense upon your family.'

'If it were to come over again, I would not,' acknowledged Herbert. 'I thought then I was acting for the best.'

'Pshaw!' was the peevish ejaculation of Mr. Dare.

'Altogether,' resumed Herbert, 'I think I had better go away. After a time, something or other may turn up to make things smoother here, and then I can come home again; unless I find a better opening abroad. I may; and I believe I shall like living there.'

'Very well,' said Mr. Dare, after some minutes' silence. 'It may be for the best. At all events, it will give time for things here to blow over. If you don't find it what you like, you can but come back.'

'I shall be sure not to come back, unless I can square up some of my liabilities here,' returned Herbert. 'You must help me to get there, sir.'

'What do you want?' asked Mr. Dare.

'Fifty pounds.'

'I can't do it, Herbert,' was the prompt answer.

'I must have it, if I am to go,' was Herbert's firm reply. 'There are two or three trifles here which I will not leave unsettled, and I cannot go over there with pockets entirely empty. Fifty pounds is not such a great sum, sir, to pay to get rid of me.'

Old Anthony Dare knit his brow with perplexity. He supposed he must furnish the money, though he did not in the least see how it was to be done.

The matter settled, Herbert took his hat and walked out. The first object his eyes alighted on outside was Sergeant Delves. That worthy, pacing through the town, had brought himself to an anchor right opposite the office of Mr. Dare, and was regarding it, lost in a brown study. The sergeant was in a state of discomfiture, touching the affair of the late Anthony Dare. He had lost no time in looking after Miss Caroline Mason, as he had promised himself; and the sequence had been—defeat. Without any open stir on the part of the police—without allowing Caroline herself to know that she was doubted—the sergeant contrived to put himself in full possession of her movements on that night. The result proved that she must be exempt from the suspicion; or, as the sergeant expressed it, 'was out of the hole;' and that gentleman remained at fault again.

Herbert crossed over to him. 'What are you looking at, Delves?'

'I wasn't looking at nothing in particular,' was the answer. 'Coming in sight of your office, it naturally brought my thoughts back on that unsatisfactory business. I never was so baffled before.'

'It is very strange who it could have been,' observed Herbert. 'I often think of it.'

'Never so baffled before,' continued the sergeant, as if there had been no interruption to his own words. 'I could almost have been upon my oath at the time that the murderer was in the house; hadn't left it; and yet——'

'You could have been upon your oath it was I,' interrupted Herbert.

'It's true. I could. But you had yourself chiefly to thank for it, Mr. Herbert Dare, through making a mystery of your movements that night. After you were cleared, my mind turned to that girl; and that, I found, was no go.'

'What girl?' interrupted Herbert.

'The one in Honey Fair; your brother Anthony's old sweetheart. It wasn't her, though; I have got the proofs. Charlotte East had got her to her house on that evening, and kept her till

twelve o'clock, when she went home to bed in her garret. Charlotte's a-going to try to make something of her again. And now I am baffled, and I don't deny it.'

'To suspect any girl is ridiculous,' observed Herbert Dare. 'No girl, it is to be hoped, would possess the courage or the strength to accomplish such a deed as that.'

'You don't know 'em as us police do,' nodded the sergeant. 'I was asking your father only a day or two ago, whether he could make cocksure of his servants, that they had not been in it——'

'Of our servants?' interrupted Herbert, in surprise. 'What an idea!'

'Well, I have gone round to my old opinion—that it *was* somebody in the house,' returned the sergeant. 'But it seems the servants are all on the square. I can't make it out.'

'Why on earth should you suppose it to be any body in the house?' questioned Herbert, in considerable wonderment.

'Because I do,' was the answer. 'Us police see and note down what others pass over. There were odds and ends of things at the time that made us infer it; and I can't get it out of my mind.'

'It is an impossibility that it could have been a resident of the house,' dissented Herbert. 'Every one in it is above suspicion.'

'Who do *you* fancy it might have been?' asked the sergeant, abruptly, almost as if he wished to surprise Herbert out of an incautious answer.

But Herbert had nothing to tell him; no suspicion was on his mind to be surprised out of. 'If I could fancy it was, or might be, any particular individual, I should come to you and say so, without asking,' he replied. 'I am as much at fault as you can be. Anthony may have made slight enemies in the town, what with his debts and his temper, and one thing or other; but no enemies of that terrible nature—capable of killing him. I wish I could see cause for a reasonable suspicion,' he added with emotion. 'I would give my right arm'—stretching it out—'to solve the mystery. As well for my sake as for my dead brother's.'

'Well, all I can say is, that I am right down upon my beam ends,' concluded the sergeant.

Meanwhile Henry Ashley was getting little better. He had fallen into a state of utter prostration. Mental anguish had told upon him bodily, and his physical weakness was no doubt great; but he made no effort to rouse himself. He would lie for hours, his eyes half-closed, noticing no one. The medical men said they had seen nothing like it, and Mr. and Mrs. Ashley grew alarmed. The only one to remonstrate with him—he alone held the key to its cause—was William Halliburton.

William's influence over him was very great; he yielded to no one, not even to his father, as he would yield to William. Henry gave the reins to his tongue, and said all sorts of irritating things to William, as he did to everybody else. It only masked the deep affection, the lasting friendship, which had taken possession of his heart for William.

'Let me be; let me be,' he said to William one day, in answer to a remonstrance that he should rouse himself. 'I told you that my life had passed out with *her*.'

'But your life has not passed out with her,' argued William; 'your life is in you, just as much as it ever was. And it is your duty to make some use of your life: not to let it run to waste—as you are doing.'

'It does not affect you,' was the tart reply.

'It does very much affect me. I am grieved to see you hug your pain, instead of shaking it off; vexed to think that a man should so bury his days. It is an unfortunate thing that nobody is cognizant of this matter but myself.'

'Is it though!' retorted Henry. 'You are a fine Job's comforter, you are!'

'Yes, it is. Were it known to those about you, you would not for shame lie here, and indulge regrets after an imprudent and silly girl.'

Henry flashed an angry glance at him from his soft dark eye. 'Take care, my good fellow! I can stand some things; but I don't stand all.'

'An imprudent, silly girl, who does not care a rush for you,' emphatically repeated William; 'whose wild and ill-judged affection is given to another. Was there ever infatuation like unto yours!'

'Have a care, I tell you!' burst forth Henry. 'By what right do you say these things to me?'

'I say them for your good—and I intend that you should feel them. When a surgeon's knife probes a wound, the patient groans and winces; but it is done to cure him.'

'You are a man of eloquence!' sarcastically rejoined Henry. 'Pity but you could flourish at the Bar, and take the anticipated shine out of Frank!'

'Answer me one plain question, Henry. Do you still cast a hope to Anna Lynn?—to her becoming your wife?'

With a shriek of anger, Henry caught up his slipper, and sent it flying through the air at William s head.

'What's that for?' equably demanded William, dodging his head out of the way.

'How dare you hint at such a thing? I told you there were some things that I'd not stand. Is it fit that one who has figured in such an esca-

pade should be made the wife of an Ashley? If we were left by our two selves upon the earth, all else gone dead and out of it, I'd not marry her.'

'Precisely so. I have judged you rightly. Then, under this state of things, what in the name of fortune is the use of your lying here and thinking of her?'

'I don't think of her,' fractiously returned Henry. 'You are always fancying things.'

'You do think of it. I can see that you do. I should be above it,' quaintly continued William.

'Go and pick up my slipper.'

'Will you come down to tea this evening?'

'No, I won't. You come here and preach up this morality, or divinity, or whatever you may please to term it, to me; but, wait and see how you'd act, if you should ever get struck on the keen shaft as I have been.'

'Come, let me help you up.'

'Don't bother. I am not going to get up. I——'

At that moment, Mr. Ashley opened the door. His errand likewise was to induce Henry to leave his sofa and his room, and join them below. Henry could not be brought to comply.

'No. I have just told William. I cannot think why he did not go back and say so. He only stops here to worry me. There! get along, William: and come back when you have swallowed enough tea.'

Mr. Ashley laid his hand on William's arm, as they walked together along the corridor, and brought him to a halt. 'What is this illness of Henry's? There is some secret connected with it, I am sure, and you are cognizant of it. I must know what it is.'

Mr. Ashley's tone was a decided one; his manner firm. William made no reply.

'Tell me what it is, William.'

'I cannot,' said William. 'Certainly not without Henry's permission; and I do not think he will give it. If it were my secret, sir, instead of his, I would tell it at your bidding.'

'Is it on the mind or the body?'

'The mind. I think the worst is over. Do not speak to him about it, I pray you, sir.'

'William, is it anything that can be remedied? By money?—by any means at command?'

'It can never be remedied,' replied William, earnestly. 'Were the whole world brought to bear its help upon it, it could do nothing. Time and his own good sense must effect the cure.'

'Then I may as well not ask about it if I cannot aid. You are fully in his confidence?'

'Yes. And all that another can do, I am doing. We have a battle daily. I want to get him out of this apathy.'

'Oh, that you could!' aspirated Mr. Ashley.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LOSS FOR POMERANIAN KNOLL.

Pomeranian Knoll had scarcely recovered its equanimity after the shock of the departure of Herbert Dare for foreign parts, when it found itself about to be shorn of another inmate. Herbert, what with one thing and another, had brought a good deal of vexation upon the paternal home; Helstonleigh also had not been holding him in any extensive favour since the trial; and that home was not sorry that he should absent himself from it for a time. But it certainly did not bargain for his announcing his departure one night, and being off the next morning.

A week or two after his departure, the Signora Varsini received a letter with a foreign postmark on it. The fact was nothing extraordinary in itself; the signora did occasionally receive letters bearing foreign post-marks; but this one threw her into a state of commotion, the like of which had never been witnessed. Pushing the letter into the deepest pocket of her dress when it was delivered to her, she finished giving the music lesson to Minny, which she was occupied upon, and then retired to her room to peruse it. From this she emerged a short while after, with a long face of consternation, uttering frantic ejaculations. Mrs. Dare was quite alarmed. Whatever was the matter with mademoiselle?

'Ah, what misère! what désolation! what tristes nouvelles! The letter was from her aunt in Paris, who was thrown upon her deathbed; and she, mademoiselle, must hasten thither without delay. If she could not start by a train that day, she must go by the first one on the next. She was désolée to leave madame at a coup; her heart would break in bidding adieu to the young ladies; but necessity was stern. She must make her baggage forthwith, and would be obliged to madame for her salary.

Mrs. Dare was taken—as the saying runs—in a heap. She had not cared to part with mademoiselle so soon, although the retaining her entailed an additional expense, which they could ill afford in their gradually increasing embarrassments and straitening means; but the chief point that puzzled her was the paying up of the salary. Between thirty and forty pounds were due. There appeared, however, to be no help for it, and she applied to Mr. Dare.

'You may as well ask me for my head as for that sum to day,' was that gentleman's reply, thinking he was destined never to find peace on earth. 'Tell her you will send it after her, if she must go.'

Mrs. Dare shook her head. It would not be of the least use, she was sure. Mademoiselle

was not one to be put off in that way, or to depart without her money.

How Mr. Dare managed it he perhaps hardly knew himself; but he brought home the money at night, and the governess was paid in full. On the following morning there was a ceremonious leavetaking, loud and suggestive on the part of mademoiselle. She saluted them all on both cheeks, including Mr. Dare, and promised to write every week, at least. A fly came to the door for her and her luggage, and George Dare mounted the box to escort her to the station. Mademoiselle politely invited him inside; but he had just lighted a cigar, and preferred to stop where he was.

'I say, mademoiselle,' cried he, after she was seated in the railway carriage, 'if you should happen to come across Herbert, I wish you'd tell him——'

Mademoiselle interrupted with a burst of indignation. *She* come across Monsieur Herbert! What should bring her coming across *him*? Monsieur George must be fou to think it. Monsieur Herbert was not in Paris, was he? She had understood he was in Holland.

'Oh, well, it's all on the other side of the Channel,' answered George, whose geographical notions of the Continent were not very definite 'Perhaps you won't see him, though, mademoiselle; so never mind.'

Mademoiselle replied by telling him to take care of himself; for the whistle was sounding George drew back, and watched the train or mademoiselle nodding her farewell to him from the window.

And that was the last that Helstonleigh saw o Mrs. Dare's Italian governess, the Signora Varsini. Helstonleigh might not have been any the worse had it never seen the first of her. Mrs Dare, after her departure, suddenly remembered that mademoiselle had once told her she had no a single relative in the world. Who could this aunt be, to whom she was hastening?

And Henry Ashley? As the weeks and the months went on, Henry began to rouse himself from his prostration; his apathy. William Halliburton made no secret of it to Henry, that it was suspected he was suffering from some inward grief which he was concealing, and that he had been questioned on the point by Mr. Ashley 'You know,' said William, 'I shall have no resource but to *tell*, unless you show yourself a sensible man, and come out of this nonsense.'

It alarmed Henry: rather than have his secret feelings betrayed for the family benefit, he could have died. In a grumbling and discontented sort of mood, he got about again, and resumed his idle occupations (such as they were) as usual. One evening William enticed him out for a walk, held possession of his arm, and pounced into Robert East's, before Henry well knew where he was. He sat down, apathetic and indifferent, after nodding carelessly to the respectful salutation of the men. 'I must give just ten minutes to them, as I am here,' observed William. 'You can go to sleep the while.'

The ten minutes lengthened into twenty, and Henry's attention was so far aroused that he came to the table in his impulsive way, and began talking on his own account. When William was ready to go, he was not; and he actually told the men that he would come round again. It was a great point gained.

Small beginnings, it has been remarked, make great endings. The humble, confined way in which the class had begun at Robert East's; the vague ideas of William upon the subject; the doubting ones of East and Crouch, were looked back upon with a smile. For the little venture had swollen itself into a great undertaking—an undertaking that was destined to effect a revolution throughout the whole of Honey Fair, and might probably even extend to Helstonleigh itself. The drawback now was want of room; numbers were being kept away by it. Henry Ashley did go again; and, finding that books of the right kind ran short, he, the day after his second visit, wrote off an order for a whole cargo.

Mr. Ashley was in a state of inward delight. Anything to rouse him? 'You think it will succeed, that movement, do you, Henry?' he carelessly observed.

'It's safe to succeed,' was the answer. William, with his palavering, has gained the ear of the fellows. I don't believe there's William Halliburton's equal in the whole world!' he added, with enthusiasm. 'Fancy his sacrificing his time to such a thing, and for no benefit to himself! It will bear a rich crop of fruit too. If I have the gift—I'll give you a long word for once—of rationation, this reform of William's will be more extensive than we now foresee.'

One evening, the way in which Honey Fair rather liked to spend its Sundays was under discussion; namely, the men in smoking; the women patterning and dirty; the children fighting and quarreling in the dirt outside. William Halliburton was asking them in a half-earnest, half-joking manner, what particular benefit they found in it, that it should not be remedied? Could they impart its pleasures to him? If so——'

His voice suddenly faltered and stopped. Standing just inside the door of the room, a quiet spectator and listener of the proceedings, was Thomas Ashley. The men followed the bent of William's gaze, saw who was amongst them, and rose in respectful silence.

Mr. Ashley came forward, signing to William to continue. But William's eloquence had died out, leaving only a heightened colour in its place. In the presence of Mr. Ashley, whom he loved and respected, he had grown timid as a child.

'Do you know,' said Mr. Ashley, addressing the men, 'it gives me greater pleasure to see you here, than it would do were I to hear that you had come into a fortune?'

They smiled and shook their heads. 'Fortunes didn't come to the like o' them.'

'Never mind,' replied Mr. Ashley; 'fortunes are not the best gifts in life.'

He stayed talking with them some little time, quiet words of encouragement, and then withdrew, wishing them good luck. William departed with him; and as they passed through Honey Fair, the women ran to their doors to gaze after them. Mr. Ashley, slightly bent with his advancing years, leaned upon William's arm, but his face was fresh as ever, and his dark hair showed no signs of age. William, erect, noble: his height greater than Mr. Ashley's, his forehead broader, his deep grey eyes strangely earnest and sincere; and a flitting smile playing on his lips. He was listening to Mr Ashley's satisfaction at what he had witnessed.

'How long do you intend to sacrifice your evenings to them?'

'It is no sacrifice, Mr. Ashley. I am glad to do it. I consider it one of the best uses to which my evenings could be put. I intend to enlist Henry for good in the cause, if I can.'

'You will be an ingenious persuader if you do,' returned Mr. Ashley. 'I would give half I am worth,' he abruptly added, 'to see the boy take an interest in life.'

'It will be sure to come, sir. One of these days I shall surprise him into reading a good play to the men. Something to laugh at. It will be a beginning.'

'He is very much better,' observed Mr. Ashley. 'The listless apathy is going.'

'Oh, yes. He is all but cured.'

'What was it, William?'

William was taken by surprise. He did not answer, and Mr Ashley repeated the question.

'It is his secret, sir; not mine.'

'You must confide it to me,' said Mr Ashley, in his tone of quiet firmness. 'You know me, William. When I promise that neither it nor the fact of its having been disclosed to me, shall escape me, either directly or indirectly, to any living person, you know that you may depend upon me.'

He paused. William did not speak; he was debating with himself what he *ought* to do.

'William, it is a relief that I must have. Since my suspicions, that there was a secret, were confirmed, I cannot tell you what improbable fancies and fears have not run riot in my brain. For prostration so excessive to have overtaken him, one would almost think he had been guilty of murder, or some other unaccountable crime. *You must relieve my mind*, which, in spite of my uncontrollable fancies, I do not doubt the truth will do. It will make no difference to any one; it will only be an additional bond between myself and you; and you, my almost son.'

William's duty rose before him, clear and distinct. But when he spoke, it was in a whisper.

'He loved Anna Lynn.'

Mr. Ashley walked on without comment. William resumed.

'Had that unhappy affair not taken place, Henry's intention was to make her his wife, provided you could have been brought to consent. His whole days used to be spent, I believe, in planning how he could best invent a chance of obtaining it.'

'And now?' very sharply asked Mr. Ashley.

'Now the thing is at an end for ever. Henry's good sense has come to his aid; I suppose I may say his pride—his self-esteem. Innocent of actual ill as Anna was in the affair, there was sufficient reflection cast upon her to prove to Henry that his hopeful visions could never be carried out. That was Henry's secret, sir: and I almost feared the blow would have killed him. But he is overgetting it.'

Mr. Ashley drew a deep breath. 'William, I thank you. You have relieved me from a nightmare; and you may forget having given me the confidence if you like, for it will never be abused. What are you going to do about space?' he continued, in a different tone.

'About space, sir?'

'For those protégés of yours, at East's. They seem to me to be tolerably confined for it, there.'

'Yes and that is not the worst,' said William. 'Men are asking to join every day, and they can not be taken in.'

'I can't think how you manage to get so many—and to keep them.'

'I suppose the chief secret is, that their interest enters into it. We contrive to keep that up. Most of them would not go back to the Horned Ram for the world.'

'Well, where shall you stow them?'

'It is more than I can say, sir. We must manage it somehow.'

'Henry told me you were ambitious enough to aspire to the Mormon failure.'

'I was foolish enough,' replied William, with a laugh. 'Seeing it was very much in the condi-

tion of the famed picture taken of the good Dr Primrose and his family—useless—I went and offered a rent for it—only a trifling sum, it is true; but if our fires but kept it from damp, one would think the builder might have been glad to let it, thrown as it is upon his hands. I told him so.'

'What did he say?'

'He stood out for thirty pounds. But that's more than I—than we can afford.'

'And who was going to find the money? You?'

William hesitated; but did not see any way out of the dilemma.

'Well, sir, you know it is a sad pity for the good work to be stopped, through so insignificant a trifle as want of room.'

'I think it is,' replied Mr. Ashley. 'You can hire it to-morrow, and move your forms and tables and books into it as soon as you like. I will find the rent.'

The words took William by surprise. 'Oh, Mr. Ashley, do you really mean it?'

'Really mean it? It is little enough, compared with what you are doing. A few years, William, and your name may be great in Helstonleigh. You are working on for it.'

William walked with Mr Ashley as far as his house, and then turned back to his own. He found sorrow there. Not having been home since dinner time, for he had taken tea at Mr Ashley's, he was unconscious of some tidings which had been brought by the afternoon's post. Jane sat and grieved while she told him. Her brother Robert was dead. Very rarely indeed did she hear from the New World; Margaret appeared to be too full of cares and domestic bustle to write often. She might not have written now, but to tell of the death of Robert.

'I have lost myself sometimes in a vision of seeing Robert home again,' said Jane, with a sigh. 'And now he is gone!'

'He was not married, was he?' asked William.

'No. I fear he never got on very well. Never to be at his ease.'

Gar came in noisily, and interrupted them. The death of an uncle whom he had never seen, and who had lived thousands of miles away, did not appear to Gar to be a matter calling for any especial amount of grief. Gar was in high spirits on his own account; for Gar was going to Cambridge. Not in all the pomp and grandeur of an unlimited purse, however, but as a humble sizar.

Gar, not seeing his way particularly clear, had been wise enough to pluck up the courage and apply for counsel to the head master of the college school. He had told him that he meant to go to college, and how he meant to go, and he asked Mr. Keating if he could help him to a situation, where he might be useful between terms.

'A school where I might become a junior assistant,' suggested Gar. 'Or any family who would take me to read with their sons? If I only earned my food, it would be so much the less weight upon my mother,' added he, in the candid spirit peculiar to the family.

So that, altogether, Gar was in spirits, and did not by any means put on superfluous mourning for a gentleman who had died in the backwoods of Canada, although he was his mother's brother.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MISS ASHLEY'S OFFER.

'Mary,' said Mr. Ashley, 'I have received an offer of marriage for you.'

A somewhat abrupt announcement to make to a young lady, and Mr. Ashley spoke in the gravest tone. They were seated round the breakfast table, Mary by her mother's side, who was pouring out the coffee. Mary looked surprised, rather amused; but that was the only emotion discernible in her countenance.

'It is fine to be you, Miss Mary!' struck in Henry, before anybody could speak. 'Pray, sir, who is the venturer?'

'He assures me that his happiness is bound up in his offer being accepted,' resumed Mr. Ashley. 'I fancy he felt inclined to assure me also that Mary's was. Of course all I can do is to lay the proposal before her.'

'What is it that you are talking of, Thomas?' interposed Mrs. Ashley, unable until then to find her tongue, and speaking with some acrimony. 'I do not consider Mary old enough to be married. How can you think of saying such things before her?'

'Neither do I, mamma,' said Mary with a laugh. 'I like my home here too well to leave it.'

'And while you are talking sentiment, my curiosity is on the rack,' cried Henry. 'I have inquired the name of the bridegroom, and I should like an answer.'

'Would-be,' put in Mary.

'Mary, I am ashamed of you,' went on Henry. 'I blush for your ill-manners. Nice credit she does to your bringing up, mamma! When young ladies of condition receive a celestial offer, they behave with due propriety, hang their heads with a blush, and subdue their speech to a whisper. And here's Mary—look at her—talking out loud, and making merry over it. Once more, sir, who is the adventurous gentleman? Is it good old General Wells, our gouty neighbour opposite,

who is lifted in and out of his chariot for his daily airing? I have told Mary repeatedly that she was setting her cap for him.'

'It is not so advantageous a proposal in a financial point of view,' observed Mr. Ashley, maintaining his impassibility. 'It proceeds from one of my dependents at the manufactory.'

Mary had the sugar-basin in her hand at the moment, and a sudden tremor seemed to seize her. She set it down, but so clumsily, that all the top lumps fell off. Her face had turned to a glowing crimson. Mr. Ashley noticed it.

Mrs. Ashley only noticed the sugar.

'Mary, how came you to do that? Very careless, my dear.'

Mary set herself meekly to pick up the lumps, the flush of crimson giving place to pallor. She lifted her handkerchief to her face, and held it there, as if she had a cold.

'The honour comes from Cyril Dare,' said Mr. Ashley.

'Cyril Dare!'

'Cyril Dare!'

In different tones of scorn, but each expressing it most fully, the repetition broke from Mrs. Ashley and Henry. Mary, on the contrary, recovered her equanimity and her countenance. She laughed out, as if she were glad.

'What did you say to him, papa?'

'I gave him my opinion only. That I thought he had mistaken my daughter, if he entertained hopes that she would listen to his suit. The question rests with you, Mary.'

'Oh, papa, what nonsense! rests with me! Why you know I would never have Cyril Dare.'

A smile crossed Mr. Ashley's face. He probably *had* known it.

'Cyril Dare!' repeated Mary, as if unable to overcome her astonishment 'He must have turned silly. I would not have Cyril Dare if he were worth his weight in gold.'

'And he must be worth a great deal more than his weight in gold, Mary, before I would consent to your having him,' quietly rejoined Mr. Ashley.'

'Have *him*!' echoed Henry. 'If I feared there was a danger of the daughter of all the Ashleys so degrading herself, I should bribe cook to make an arsenic cake, and cut the young lady a portion myself, and stand by while she ate it.'

'Don't talk foolishly, Henry,' rebuked Mrs. Ashley.

'Mamma, I must say I do not think that it would be half so foolish as Cyril Dare was,' cried Mary, with spirit.

Mrs. Ashley, relieved from any temporary fear of losing Mary, was going on with her breakfast in comfort.

'Did Cyril say how he meant to provide for Mary, if he obtained her?' asked she, with an amused look.

'He did not touch upon ways and means,' replied Mr. Ashley. 'I conclude that he intended I should have the honour of keeping them both.'

Henry Ashley leaned back in his chair and laughed.

'If this is not the richest joke I have heard a long while. Cyril Dare, the kinsman of Herbert, the beautiful. Con-found his im-pu-dence!'

'Then you decline the honour of the alliance, Mary?' said Mr. Ashley. 'What am I to tell him?'

'What you please, papa. Tell him, if you like, that I would rather have a chimney-sweep. I *would*, if it came to a choice between the two. How very senseless of Cyril to think of such a thing.'

'How very shrewd, I think, Mary—if he could only have got you,' was the reply of Mr. Ashley.

'If!' saucily put in Mary.

Henry bent over the table to his sister.

'I tell you what Mary. You go this morning and offer yourself to our gouty friend, the general. He will jump at it, and we'll get the banns put up. We can not, you know, be subjected to such shocks as these on your account; it is unreasonable to expect us to be I assure you it will be the most effectual plan to set Cyril Dare, and those of his tribe, at rest. No, thank you, ma'am,' turning to Mrs. Ashley—'no more coffee. This has been enough breakfast for me.'

'Who is this?' asked Mr. Ashley, as footsteps were heard on the gravel walk.

Mrs. Ashley lifted her eyes.

'It is William Halliburton.'

'William Halliburton!' echoed Henry. 'Ah—if you could have put his heart and intellects into Cyril's skin, now, it might have done.'

He spoke with that freedom of speech which characterized him, and in which, from his infirmity, he had not been checked. No one made any remark in answer, and William entered. He had come to ask some business question of Mr. Ashley.

'I will walk down with you,' said Mr. Ashley, 'and see to it, then. Take a seat, William.'

'It is getting late, sir.'

'Well I suppose you can afford to be late for once,' replied Mr. Ashley. And William smiled as he sat down.

'We have had a letter from Cambridge, this morning. From Gar.'

'And how does Mr. Gar get on?' asked Henry.

'First rate. He takes a leaf out of Frank's book; determined to see no difficulties. Frank's

letters are always cheering. I really believe he cares no more for being a servitor, than he would for wearing a hat at Christ church. All his wish is to get on; he looks to the future.'

'But he does his duty in the present,' quietly remarked Mr Ashley.

William smiled.

'It is the only way to insure the future, sir. Frank and Gar have been learning that all their lives.'

Mr. Ashley, telling William not to get the fidgets, for he was not ready yet, withdrew to the next room with his wife. They had some weighty domestic matter to settle, touching a dinner party. Henry linked his arm within William's, and drew him to the window, throwing it open to the early spring sunshine. Mary remained at the breakfast table.

'What do you think Cyril Dare, the presuming, has had the conscience to ask?' began he.

'I know,' replied William. 'I heard him say he should ask it yesterday.'

'The deuce you did!' uttered Henry. 'And you did not knock him down?'

'Knock him down! Was it any business of mine?'

'You might have done it as my friend, I think. A slight correction of his impudence.'

'I do not see that it is your business either,' returned William. 'It is Mr. Ashley's.'

'Oh, indeed! Perhaps you would like it carried out?'

'I have no right to say it shall not be.'

'Thank you?' chafed Henry 'Mary,' he called out to his sister, 'here's Halliburton recommending that that business, we know of, shall be carried out.'

William only laughed. He was accustomed to Henry's exaggerations.

'It is what Cyril has been expecting for years,' said he.

Henry gazed at him.

'What is—what are you talking of?'

'The being taken into partnership by Mr. Ashley.'

'Is it that you are blundering over? Does he expect it?' continued Henry, after a pause.

'Cyril said yesterday, the firm would soon be Ashley and Dare.'

'Did he, indeed! He had better not count upon it so as to disturb his digestion. That's presumption enough, goodness knows; but it is a fleabite compared to the other. He has asked for Mary. It is true as that we are standing here'

William turned his questioning gaze on Henry. He did not understand

'Asked for her for what? What to do?'

'To be his wife.'

'Oh!' The strange sound was not a burst of indignation, or a groan of pain, it was a mixture of both. William thrust his head out of the window.

'He actually asked the master for her yesterday!' went on Henry. 'He said his heart, or liver, or some such part of him was bound up in her: as she was bound up in him. Fancy the honour of her becoming Mrs. Cyril!'

William did not turn his head; not a glimpse of his face could be caught. 'Will she have him?' he asked, at length.

The question uncommonly exasperated Henry. 'Yes, she will. There! Go and congratulate her. You are a fool, William.'

The sound of his angry voice, not his words, penetrated to Mary's ears. She came forward. 'What is the matter, Henry?'

'So he is a fool,' was Henry's answer. 'He wants to know if you are going to marry Cyril Dare. I tell him yes. Nobody but an idiot would have asked it.'

William turned, his face full of an emotion that Henry had never seen there: a streak of scarlet on his cheeks, his earnest eyes strangely troubled. And Mary?—her face seemed to have borrowed the scarlet, as she stood there, her head and eyelashes bent.

Henry Ashley gazed, first at one, next at the other, and then turned and leaned from the window himself. In contrition for having spoken so openly of his sister's affairs? Not at all. Whistling the bars of a renowned comic song of the day, called 'The Steam Arm.'

Mr. Ashley put in his head. 'I am ready, William.'

William touched Mary's hand in silence by way of adieu, and halted as he passed Henry. 'Shall you come round to the men to-night?'

'No, I shan't,' retorted Henry. 'I am upset for the day.'

He was half way down the path when he heard himself called to by Henry, still leaning from the window. He went back to him.

'She said she'd rather have a chimney-sweep than Cyril Dare. Don't go and make a muff of yourself again.'

William turned away without any answer. Mr. Ashley, who had waited, put his arm within his, and they proceeded to the manufactory.

'Have you heard this rumour, respecting Herbert Dare, that has been wafted over from Germany within the last day or two?' inquired Mr. Ashley, as they walked along.

'Yes, sir,' replied William.

'I wonder if it is true?'

William did not answer. William's private opinion was, that it was true. It had been tol-

erably well authenticated. A rumour that need not be very specifically enlarged upon here. Helstonleigh never came to the bottom of it: never knew for certain how much of it was true, and how much false, and we cannot expect to be better favoured than Helstonleigh, in the point of enlightenment. It was not a pleasant rumour, and the late governess's name was unaccountably mixed up in it. For one thing, it said that Herbert Dare, finding commercial pursuits not congenial to his taste, had given them up, and was roaming about Germany. Mademoiselle also. It was a report that did not do credit to Herbert, or tend to reflect respectability on his family; yet Mr. Ashley fully believed that to that report he owed the application of Cyril with regard to Mary, strange as it may appear at the first glance, to say it. The application had astonished Mr. Ashley beyond everything. He could only come to the conclusion that Cyril must have entertained the hope for some time, but had been induced to disclose it prematurely. So prematurely—even allowing that other circumstances were favorable—that Mr. Ashley was tempted to laugh. A man without means, without a home, without any definite prospects, merely a workman, as may be said, in his manufactory, upon a very small salary; it was ridiculous in the extreme for *him* to offer marriage to Miss Ashley. Mr. Ashley, of upright conduct in the sight of day, was not one to wink at folly; any escapade like that, now flying about Helstonleigh as attributable to Herbert, would not be an additional recommendation in Cyril's favour. Had he hastened to speak *before* it should reach Mr. Ashley's ears? Mr. Ashley thought so. An hour after Cyril had spoken, he heard the scandal; and it flashed over his mind that to that he was indebted for the premature honour. Cyril would have liked to secure his consent before anything unpleasant transpired.

As Mr. Ashley came in view of the manufactory, Cyril Dare observed him. Cyril was lounging in an indolent manner at the entrance doors, exchanging greetings with the various passers-by. He ought to have been inside at his business; but oughts went for little with Cyril. Since Samuel Lynn's departure, Cyril had been living in clover; enjoying nearly as much idleness as he liked. William assumed no authority over him, though full authority had been given to William over the manufactory in general; and Cyril, save when he just happened to be under Mr. Ashley's eye, passed his time agreeably. Cyril stared as the master came in view, and then whisked in, his spirits going down a little. To see the master thus walking confidentially with William, seemed to argue unfavourably to his suit; though why it should seem so, Cyril did not know. Cyril's staring was occasioned by that fact; he had never been promoted to the honour of thus walking familiarly with Mr. Ashley. In fact, for the master, a reserved and proud man with all his good qualities, to link his arm within a dependent's, astonished Cyril considerably.

When they entered, Cyril was at work in his apron, standing at the counter in the master's room, steady and assiduous, as though he had been there for the last half hour. The master came in, but William remained in Mr. Lynn's room.

'Good morning, sir,' said Cyril.

'Good morning,' replied the master.

He sat down to his desk and opened a letter that was lying on it. Presently he looked up.

'Cyril!'

'Yes, sir.'

'Step here.'

Cyril approached the desk, feeling what a lady might call nervous. The decisive moment was come: should he be provided for, for life: enjoy a good position and the means of living as a gentleman? Or would his unlucky star prevail, and consign him to—he did not quite foresee to what?

'I have spoken to Miss Ashley. She was excessively surprised at your application, and begs to decline it in the most unequivocal manner. Allow me to add a recommendation from myself, that you bury in oblivion the fact of your having made it.'

Cyril hesitated for a moment, and looked foolish. 'Why?' he asked.

'*Why?*' repeated Mr. Ashley. 'I think you could answer that query for yourself, and save me the trouble. I do not wish to go too closely into facts and causes, past and present, unless you desire it. One thing you must be palpably aware of, Cyril, that such a proposition from you to my daughter was entirely out of place. I should have rejected it point blank yesterday; in fact, in the surprise of the moment, I nearly spoke out more plainly than you would have liked, but that I thought it as well for you to have Miss Ashley's opinion as well as my own.'

'Why am I rejected, sir?' continued Cyril.

Mr. Ashley waved his hand with dignity. 'Return to your employment, Cyril. It is quite sufficient for you to know that you are rejected, without my going into motives and reasons. They might not, I say, be palatable.'

Cyril did not venture to press it further. He returned to the counter, and stood there, ostensibly going on with his work, and boiling over with rage. The master sat some little time longer, and then left the room. Soon after, William came in. His eye caught the employment of Cyril.

'Cyril,' cried he, hastily advancing to him, 'you must not make up those gloves. I told you yesterday not to touch them.'

A dangerous speech. Cyril was not unlike touchwood at that moment, liable to go off into a flame at the slightest contact. 'You told me!' he burst forth. 'Do you think I am going to do what you choose to tell me? Try it on for the future, that's all. You tell *me!*'

'They are the very best gloves, and must be sorted with niceity,' returned William. 'Don't you know that the sorting of the last parcel was found fault with in London? It vexed the master; and he desired me to do all the sorting myself, until Mr. Lynn should be at home.'

'I choose to sort,' returned Cyril.

'But you must not sort in the face of the master's orders; or, if you do, I must go over them again.'

'That's right; praise up yourself!' foamed Cyril. 'Of course you are an efficient sorter, and I am a bad one.'

'You might be as good a sorter as anybody, if you chose to give it proper time and attention. What a temper you are in this morning. What's the matter?'

'The matter is, that I have submitted to your rule long enough, but I'll do it no longer,' was the reply of Cyril, whose anger was gathering strength, and whose ill feeling towards William, down deep in his heart from long ago, had had envy added to it of late.

William made no reply. He carefully swept the dozens that Cyril had made up farther down the counter, that they might be in a stronger light.

'What's that for?' cried Cyril. 'How dare you meddle with my work? They are done as well as you can do them, any day.'

'Now where's the use of your going into this passion, Cyril? What's it for? Do you suppose I go over your work again for pleasure, or to find fault? I do it because the master has ordered me to make up every dozen that goes out; and if you do it first of all, it is sheer waste of time. See here,' added William, holding two or three pairs towards him, '*these* will not do for firsts.'

Angry Cyril! He was quite beside himself with passion. It was not this trifling matter in the daily business that would have excited him; but Mr. Ashley's rejection, his words altogether, had turned Cyril's blood into gall; and this was made the outlet. He dashed the gloves out of William's hand to the farthest part of the room, and struck him a powerful blow on the chest. It caused William to stagger; he was unprepared for it; but whether he would have returned it must remain uncertain. Before there was time or opportunity, Cyril found himself whirled backwards by a hand as powerful; and a voice of stern authority was demanding the meaning of the scene.

The hand, the voice, were those of the master.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE EXPLOSION.

'What is the meaning of this, Cyril Dare?'

Had Cyril supposed that the master was so close at hand, he had subdued his passion to something short of striking a blow. He stood against the counter, his brow lowering, his eye furious; William looked angry too. Mr. Ashley, calm and dignified, waited for an answer.

None came. Cyril was too excited to speak.

'Will you explain it?' said the master, turning to William. 'Fighting in my counting-house!'

'I cannot, sir,' replied William, recovering his equanimity. 'I do not understand it. I did nothing to provoke him, that I am aware of. It is true I said I must go over the gloves again that he had made up.'

'What are those gloves, flung there?'

'I was showing them to him—that they were not fit for firsts.'

'They are fit for firsts!' retorted Cyril, breaking his silence. 'I know I did not put a pair in that was not.'

The master went and picked up the gloves himself. Taking them to the light, he turned them about in his hands.

'I should put two of these pairs as seconds, and one as thirds,' remarked he. 'You must have been asleep when you put this one among the firsts,' he continued, indicating the latter pair, and speaking to Cyril Dare. 'It has a flaw in it.'

'Of course you will uphold Halliburton, sir, whatever he may say. That has been the case a long time.'

He spoke in an insolent tone; such as none within the walls of the manufactory had ever dared to use to the master. The master turned upon him, speaking quietly and significantly.

'You forget yourself, Cyril Dare.'

'All he does is right, and all I do is wrong,' persisted Cyril. 'You treat him, sir, just as though you considered him the gentleman instead of me.'

A half smile, which had too much of mockery in it to please Cyril, crossed the lips of Mr. Ashley.

'What's that you say about being a gentleman

Cyril? Repeat it, will you? I should like to hear it again.'

Mockery, and double mockery! Cyril's suggestive ears detected it in the tone, if no other ears could. It did not improve his temper.

'The thing is this, sir; I won't submit to this state of affairs any longer. I was not placed here to be ruled over by him; and if things can't be put upon a better footing, one of us must leave.'

'Then, as it has come to this explosion, I say the same,' struck in William. 'It is high time that things were put upon a better footing. Cyril, you have forced me to speak, and you must take the consequences Sir,' turning to the master, 'my authority over the men is ridiculed in their hearing. It ought not to be.'

'By whom?' demanded the master.

'You can ask that question of Cyril, sir.'

The master did ask it of Cyril.

'Have you done this?'

'Possibly I have,' insolently returned Cyril.

'You know you have,' rejoined William. 'Only yesterday, when I was giving directions to the stainers, he derided all I said, and one of them inquired whether I had received orders for what I was telling them. If the authority vested in me is to be undermined, the men will soon set it at nought.'

Mr. Ashley looked provoked; more so than William ever remembered to have seen him. He paused a moment, his lips quivering angrily, and then flung open the counting-house door.

'Dick!'

Dick, a young tinker of ten, black in clothes and in skin, came flying at the summons and its unusually stern tone.

'Please, sir?'

'Ring the large bell.'

Dick stared with all his eyes at hearing the words To ring the large bell between ten and eleven o'clock in the morning was a marvel that had never happened in Dick's experience. But the master's orders were to be obeyed, not questioned; and Dick, seizing upon the bell, carried it to the usual place, and rung out a prolonged peal. The master looked into the serving-room.

'James Meeking, I have ordered the bell rung for the men. Pass the word for them to come into my room; and do you and East come with them.'

The men appeared, flocking from all parts of the premises, their astonishment certainly not inferior to Dick's. What could be the meaning of the wholesale summoning to the presence of the master? They stood there crowding, a sea of curious faces. Dick, consigned to the back-ground, climbed up the door-post, and held on by it in some mysterious manner.

Mr. Ashley drew William to his side, and laid his hand upon him.

'It has been told me that the authority vested in Mr. Halliburton has not been implicitly obeyed by every one in the manufactory. I have called you before me to give you my instructions personally upon the point, that there may be no misunderstanding for the future. Whatever directions he may see fit to give, you will receive them from him, as you would from myself. I invest him with full and complete power. And in all my absences from the manufactory, whether they may be of an hour's, a day's or any longer duration, Mr Halliburton is its master.'

They touched their hair, turned and went out as far as the serving-room, collecting there to talk. In a short while one of them was seen coming back again; a grey-haired man, a sorter of leather. He addressed himself to Mr. Ashley.

'We have not disputed his orders, please sir, that we can call to mind; and if we have done it unintentional, we'd ask pardon for it, for it's what we never thought of. Next to yourself, sir, we couldn't wish for a better master nor young Mr. Halliburton. We think as much of him, sir, as we should if he was your own son.'

'All right, my men,' cheerfully responded Thomas Ashley.

But was not Cyril put in the back-ground by this? As bad as Dick had been; and Cyril had no door post to climb up, and so obtain vantage ground. He had stood with his back to the crowd and his face to the counter. When the men were out of hearing, he turned and walked up to the master.

'It is the place I thought to fill,' said he. 'It is the place that was promised me.'

'Not promised,' replied Mr. Ashley. 'Not thought to be promised. A very long while ago, you may have been spoken of conditionally, as likely to fill it. Conditionally, I say.'

'Conditionally on what, sir?'

'On your fitness for it. By conduct and by capability.'

'What is the matter with my conduct, sir?' returned Cyril, his tone a sharp one.

'It is bad,' curtly replied Mr. Ashley. 'Deceitful in public—bad in private. I have told you once before this morning that I do not care to go into details; you must know that there is no necessity.'

Cyril paused.

'I have been led to expect, sir, that you would take me into partnership.'

'Not by me,' said the master.

'My father and mother have given me the hope ever since I came.'

'I cannot help that—they had no warranty for it.'

'They have always said I should be made your partner and son-in-law,' persisted Cyril.

'They have! It is very obliging of them, I am sure, to settle my affairs for me, including the disposal of my daughter. Pray what nice little destiny may they have carved out for Mrs. Ashley, or for my son?'

Cyril chafed at the words. He would have liked, just then, to fight Mr. Ashley, as he had fought William.

'Would I ever have demeaned myself to enter a glove manufactory, disgracing my family, had I known I was to be but a workman in it?' he cried. 'No, sir, that I never would. I am served rightly, for putting myself out of my position as a gentleman.'

Mr. Ashley, but for the pity he felt, could have laughed outright. He really did feel pity for Cyril; he believed that the unhappy way in which the young Dares were turning out might be laid to the fault of their rearing, and this had rendered him considerate to Cyril. How considerate he had for a long while been, he himself alone knew; Cyril perhaps suspected.

'It is a shame!' cried Cyril. 'To be dealt with in this way is nothing less than a fraud upon me. I was led to expect that I should be made your partner.'

'Stay a bit, Cyril. I am willing to put you right upon the point. The proposal that you should be placed here, emanated in the first instance from your father. He came to me one day, here, in this very room, saying that he concluded I should not put Henry to business, and he thought it would be a fine opening for his son Cyril—you. He hinted that I should want somebody to succeed me; and that you might come to it with that view. But I most distinctly disclaimed endorsing that hint in the remotest degree. I would not subscribe to it so much as by a vague "Perhaps it may be." All that I conceded upon the point was this. I told Mr. Dare that when the time came for me to be looking out for some one to succeed me—if it ever did come—and I found his son—you—had served me faithfully, was upright in conduct and in heart—one, in short, whom I could thoroughly confide in—why, then he should have the preference over any other. So much I did say, Cyril, but no more.'

'And why won't you give me the preference, sir?'

Mr. Ashley looked at him, apparently in surprise that he could ask the question. He bent his head forward, and spoke in a low tone, but one full of meaning.

'Upright in conduct and in heart, I said, Cyril. It was an insuperable condition.'

Cyril's gaze fell before Mr. Ashley's. His conscience may have been pricking him, and he had the grace to look ashamed of himself. There ensued a pause.

Presently Cyril looked up.

'Then I am to understand, sir, that all hope of being your partner and successor is over?'

'It is. It has been over this many a year, Cyril. I should be wrong to deal otherwise than perfectly plain with you. Were you to reform anything there may have been amiss in your conduct, to become a model of excellence in the sight of Helstonleigh, I could never admit your name to be associated with mine. The very notion is offensive to me.'

Cyril—it was a great wonder—restrained his passion.

'Perhaps I had better leave, then?' he said.

'You are welcome to stay until you can find a situation more congenial,' replied Mr. Ashley. 'Provided you undertake to behave yourself.'

'Stay—and for nothing at the end!' echoed Cyril. 'No, that I never will. If I must remain a dependent, I'll try it on at something else. I am sick of this.'

He untied his apron, dashed it on the floor, and went out without another word. So furiously did he stamp through the serving-room, that James Meeking turned round to look at him, and Dick, taking a recreative balance at that moment on the edge of an upright coal-scuttle, thought he must be running for the fire-engines. Dick's speculations were disturbed by the sound of the master's voice, calling to him.

He hastened to the counting-house, and was ordered to 'take that apron away.' Dick picked it up and withdrew with it, folding it carefully against Mr. Cyril should come in. Dick little thought the manufactory had seen the last of him.

Mr. Ashley was indulging in a quiet laugh. 'Demeaning himself by entering my manufactory! Disgracing his family—the high blood of the Dares! Poor Cyril! William, do you look at it in the same light?'

William had remained in the room, taking no part whatever in the final contest. He had stood with his back to them, following his occupation. He turned round now.

'Sir, you know I do not.'

'You once told me it presented no field for getting on. What was the word you used?—was it ambition? Truly, there's not much of ambition attached to it. Nevertheless, I am satisfied with

my career, William, although I am but the glove manufacturer, Thomas Ashley.'

He satisfied! How many a one would be proud to be in the position of Thomas Ashley! William did not say so. He began to speak of Cyril Dare.

'Do you think he will come back again, sir?'

'I do not think he will Should he do so, the doors are closed to him. He has left of his own accord, and I shall not allow him to return.'

'I am very sorry,' remarked William. 'It has been partially my fault.'

'Do not make yourself uneasy. I have *tolerated* Cyril Dare here; have allowed him to remain on sufferance; and that is the best that can be said of it.'

'He may feel it as a blow.'

'As a jubilee, you mean. It will be nothing less to him. He has hated the manufactory with all his heart from the moment he first entered it, and is now, if we could see him, kicking up his heels with delight at the emancipation. Cyril Dare my partner!'

William continued his work, saying nothing. Mr. Ashley resumed.

'I must be casting my thoughts around for a fit substitute to succeed to the post of ambition Cyril coveted. Can you direct me to any quarter, William?'

Mr. Ashley was now standing at William's side, looking at him as he went over the gloves left by Cyril. He saw the red flush mount to his face. Mr. Ashley laid his hand on William's shoulder, and spoke in a low tone, full of emotion.

'It may come, my boy; my almost son! And when Thomas Ashley's head shall be low in the grave, the leading manufacturer of this city may be William Halliburton.'

A considerable rapping at the door with a thick stick interrupted the master's words. He turned to behold Mr. Dare. It appeared that Cyril had by chance met his father in the street almost immediately after going out; he had volunteered to him a most exaggerated account, and Mr. Dare had come, as he said, to learn the rights of it.

William left the room. He could not avoid remarking the bowed, broken down appearance of the man Mr. Ashley related the particulars, and the listener was obliged to acknowledge that Cyril had been to blame—had been too hasty.

'I confess it appears so,' he said. 'He must have been led away by temper. But, Mr. Ashley, you ought to stretch a point, and make a concession. We are kinsmen.'

'What concession?'

'Discharge William Halliburton. Things can never go on smoothly between him and Cyril. Stretch a point to oblige us, and send him away.'

'Discharge William Halliburton!' echoed Mr. Ashley in surprise. 'I could as soon discharge myself. William is the right hand of the business. It could get along without me, but I am not sure that it could without him.'

'Cyril can take his place.'

'Cyril is not qualified for it. And——'

'Cyril declares he will never enter the place again, so long as Halliburton is in it.'

'Cyril never will enter it again,' quietly rejoined Mr. Ashley. 'Cyril and I have parted. I will give you his wages for this week, now that you are here; legally, though, he could not claim them.'

Mr. Dare looked sad—gloomy. It was only what he had expected for some time past. 'You promised to do well by him, Mr. Ashley; to take him into partnership.'

'You must surely remember that I promised nothing of the sort,' said Mr. Ashley. 'I have been telling the same thing to Cyril. All I said—and a shrewd, business-man, as you are, could not fail thoroughly to understand me,' he pointedly added—'was, that I would choose Cyril in preference to others, provided he proved himself worthy of the preference. Circumstances appear to have worked entirely against the carrying out of the idea, Mr. Dare.'

'What circumstances?'

Mr. Ashley did not immediately reply, and the question was repeated in a hasty, almost an imperative tone. Then Mr. Ashley answered it.

'I do not wish to say a word that should unnecessarily hurt your feelings; but in a matter of business I believe there is no resource but to speak plainly. The unfortunate notoriety acquired, in one way or other, by your sons, has rendered the name of Dare so conspicuous that, were there no other reason, it could never be associated with mine.'

'Conspicuous? How?' interposed Mr. Dare.

Mr. Ashley would not have believed the words were uttered as a question, but that the answer was evidently waited for. 'You ask *how*,' he said. 'Surely I need not remind you. The scandal which, in more ways than one, attached to Anthony—though I am sorry to allude to him, poor fellow, in any such way; the circumstances attending the trial of Herbert; the——'

'Herbert was innocent,' interrupted Mr. Dare.

'Innocent of the murder, no doubt; as innocent as you or I. But people make free with his name in other ways; had often made free with it. And look at this last report, wafted over to us from Germany, that is just now astonishing the city!'

'Hang him for a simpleton!' burst forth Mr. Dare.

'It is all so much discredit on the name—on the

family altogether,' concluded Mr. Ashley, as if his sentence had not been interrupted.

'The faults of his brothers ought to be no good reason for your rejecting Cyril.'

'They are not the reason of my rejecting him,' quietly returned Mr. Ashley.

'No? You have just said they were.'

'I said the notoriety given by your sons to the name of Dare would bar its association with mine. In saying "your sons," I included Cyril himself. *He* interposes the greatest barrier of all. Were the rest of them of good report in the sight of day, Cyril is not.'

'What's the matter with him?' asked Mr. Dare.

'I do not care to tell you. A great deal of it you must know.'

'Go on,' cried Anthony Dare, who was leaning forward in his chair, his chin resting on his stick, like one who sets himself calmly to hear the whole.

'Cyril's private conduct is bad. He —'

'Follies of youth only,' cried old Anthony. 'He will outlive them.'

'Youth's follies sometimes end in manhood's crimes,' was the reply. 'I am thankful that my son is free from them.'

'Your son!' returned Anthony Dare, coughing down his slighting tone. 'Your son is one apart. He has not the health to be knocking about. If young men are worth anything, they are sure to be a bit wild.'

A frown passed over the master's brow. 'You are mistaken, Mr. Dare. Young men who are worth anything keep themselves from such folly. Opinions have taken a turn. Society is becoming more sensible with the world's increased enlightenment; and ill conduct, although its pursuer may be a fashionable young man, is beginning to be called by its right name. Would you believe that Cyril has, more than once, come here —I hesitate to say the word, it is so ugly a one— drunk? Drunk, Mr. Dare!'

'No!'

'He has.'

'Then he must have been a fool for his pains,' was the angry retort of old Anthony.

'He is untruthful; he is idle; he is deceitful— but I do not, I say, care to go into this. Were you cognizant of the application Cyril made to me yesterday, respecting my daughter?'

'I don't know of any application.'

'He did me the honour to make her an offer of marriage.'

Old Anthony lifted his head sharply, not speaking. The master continued:

'He said yesterday that he was acting by your advice. He repeated to-day, that you and Mrs. Dare had led him to look to Mary.'

'Well?' returned Mr. Dare. 'But I did not know he had spoken.'

'How could you—excuse me, I again say, if I am plain—how could you ever have entertained so wild an idea?'

'Perhaps you would like to call it a presumptuous one?' chafed Mr. Dare.

'I do call it so,' returned Mr. Ashley. 'It can be regarded as nothing less; any impartial person would tell you so. I put out of the discussion altogether the want of means on the part of Cyril; I speak of its suitability. That Cyril should have aspired to an alliance with Mary Ashley was presumption in the highest degree. It has displeased me very much, and Henry looks upon it in the light of an insult.'

'Who's Henry?' scornfully returned Mr. Dare. 'A dreamy hypochondriac! Pray, is Cyril not as well born as Mary Ashley?'

'Has he been as well reared? Is he proving that he has been? A man's conduct is of far more importance than his birth.'

'It would seem that you care little about birth, or rearing either, or you would not exalt Halliburton to a level with yourself.'

The master fixed his expressive eyes on Anthony Dare. Halliburton's birth is, at any rate, as good as your family's and mine. His father's mother and your wife's father were brother and sister.'

Old Anthony looked taken by surprise. 'I don't know anything about it,' said he, somewhat roughly. 'I know a little of how he has been bred, he and his brothers.'

'So do I,' said Mr. Ashley. 'I wish a few more in the world had been bred in the same way.'

'Why! they have been bred to work!' exclaimed old Anthony, in astonishment. 'They have not been bred as gentlemen. They have not had enough to eat.'

The concluding sentence elicited an involuntary laugh from the master. 'At any rate, the want does not appear to have stinted their growth, or injured them in a physical point of view,' he rejoined, a touch of sarcasm in his tone. 'They are fine grown men; and, Mr. Dare, they are *gentlemen*, whether they have been bred as such or not. Gentlemen in looks, in manners, and in mind and heart.'

'I don't care what they are,' again repeated old Anthony. 'I did not come here to talk about them, but about Cyril. Your exalting Halliburton into the general favour that ought legitimately to have been Cyril's, is a piece of injustice. Cyril says you have this morning announced publicly that Halliburton is the master, under you. It is a flagrant injustice.'

'No man living has ever had cause to tax me with injustice,' impressively answered Thomas Ashley. 'I have been far more just to Cyril than he deserves. Stay—"just" is a wrong word. I have been far more *lenient* to him. Shall I tell you that I have kept him on here out of compassion, in the hope that the considerate way in which I treated him might be an inducement to him to turn over a new leaf, and discard his faults? I would not turn him away to be a town's talk. Down deep within the archives of my memory, my own sole knowledge, I buried the great fault of which he was guilty here. He was young—and I would not take from him his fair fame on the very threshold of his commercial life.

'Great fault?' hesitated Mr. Dare, looking half frightened.

Thomas Ashley inclined his head, and lowered his voice to a deeper whisper.

'When he robbed my desk of the cheque, I fancy your own suspicions of him were to the full as much awakened as mine.'

There was no reply, unless a groan from Anthony Dare could be called such. His hands, supporting his chin, rested on his stick still. Mr. Ashley resumed—

'I became convinced, though not in the first blush of the affair, that the transgressor was no other than Cyril; and I deliberated what my course should be. Natural impulse would have led me to turn him away, if not to prosecute. The latter would scarcely have been palatable towards one of my wife's kindred. What was I to do with him? Turn him adrift without a character? and a character that would get him any other situation of confidence, I could not give him. I resolved to keep him on. For his own sake I would give him a chance of redeeming what he may have done in a moment's thoughtless temptation. I spoke to him privately. I did not tell him in so many words that I knew him to be guilty; but he could not well misunderstand that my suspicions were awakened. I told him his conduct had not been good—not such that I could approve; but that I was willing, for his own sake, to bury the past in silence, and retain him, as a last chance. I very distinctly warned him what would be the consequences of the smallest repetition of his fault; that no consideration for myself or for him would induce me to look over it a second time. Thus he stayed on—I giving an eye to his conduct continually, and taking due precautions for the protection of my property, and keeping fast my keys. James Meeking received my orders that Mr. Cyril should never be called upon to help pay the men, or to help count the packets of half-pence; and when the man looked wonderingly at me in return, I casually added that there was no cause to put Mr. Cyril to an employment he particularly disliked, while he could call upon East to help him, or in case of necessity, upon Mr. Halliburton. Never think again, Mr. Dare, that I have been unjust to your son. If I have erred at all, it has been on the side of kindness.'

There was a long pause. Anthony Dare probably was feeling the kindness, in spite of himself.

'What have you had to complain of in him since?' he asked.

'Not of any more robbery—but of his general conduct a great deal. He is deceitful—he has appeared here in the state I have hinted to you—he is incorrigibly idle. He probably fancies, because I do not take a very active part in the management of my business, and my work-people, that I sit here with my eyes shut, seeing little and knowing less of what goes on around me. He is essentially mistaken—I am cognizant of all—as much so, or nearly as much so, as Samuel Lynn would be, were he at his post again. Look at his sorting of the gloves, for instance—the very thing about which the disturbance occurred just now. Cyril can sort, if he pleases; he is as capable of sorting them properly as I should be—perhaps more so; but he does not do it: and every dozen he attempts to make up have to be done over again. In point of fact, he has been of no real use here; for nothing that he attempts to do will he do well. A fit hand to fill the post of manager! Taking all these facts into consideration,' added the master, 'you will not be surprised that an offer of marriage from Cyril Dare to my daughter, bears an appearance little removed from insult.'

So it was all known to Mr. Ashley, and there was an end of Cyril and his hopes! It may be said of his prospects.

'What is he to do now?' broke from the lips of Anthony Dare.

'Indeed I do not know; unless he changes his habits, he will do no good at anything.'

'Won't you take him back?'

'No,' unequivocally pronounced Mr. Ashley. 'He has left of his own accord, and he must abide by it. Stay—hear me out. Were I to allow him to return, he would not remain a week; I am certain of it. That Cyril has been acting a part to beguile me of my favour with regard to those foolish hopes of his, there is no doubt. The hopes gone, he would not keep up even the semblance of good conduct; neither would he submit to the rule of William Halliburton. It is best as it is; he is gone, and he cannot return.

My opinion is, that were the offer of return made to him, he would reject it.'

Mr. Dare's opinion was not far different, although he had pleaded for the concession.

'Then you will not make him your partner?' he resumed.

'Mr. Dare!'

'I suppose you will take Halliburton?'

'It is very probable. Whoever I take must be a man of probity and honour; and a gentleman,' he added, with a stress upon the word. 'William Halliburton is all that.'

Anthony Dare rose with a groan. He could contend no longer.

'My sons have been my bane,' he uttered from between his bloodless lips. 'I wonder, sometimes, whether they were born bad.'

'No,' said Thomas Ashley. 'The badness has come with their rearing.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. FRANK "CALLED."

And now there occurs another gap in the story—a gap of years; and we have entered on the third and last part.

The patient well-doing of the Halliburtons was approaching fruition, their struggles were well-nigh over, and they were ready to play their part, for success or for failure, in the great drama of life. Jane's troubles were at an end.

There was not space to trace the life of Frank and Gar at the Universities, to record word by word how they bore onward with unflinching perseverance, looking to the goal in view. Great praise was due to them; and they won it from those who knew what hard work was. Patiently and steadily had they laboured on, making themselves into sound and brilliant scholars, resisting the temptations that lead so many astray, and bearing the slights and mortifications incidental to their subordinate position. 'I'll take it out, when I am Lord Chancellor of England,' Frank would say, in his cheering way. Of course Frank had always intended to go up for honours; and of course Frank gained them. He went to Oxford as a humble servitor, and he quitted it a man of note. Francis Halliburton had obtained a double-first, and gained his fellowship.

He had entered himself a student of the Middle Temple long before his college career was over. The expenses of qualifying for the Bar are high, and Frank's fellowship did not suffice for all. He procured literary employment: writing a leading article for one of the daily papers, and contributing to sundry reviews.

Gar, too, had quitted Cambridge with unusual credit, though he was *not* senior wrangler. Nobody but Gar, perhaps, knew that he had aspired to that proud distinction, so it did not signify. A more solid scholar, or one with a higher character in the best sense of the term, never left the University to be ordained by the Bishop of Helstonleigh—or by any other prelate on the bench. He had a choice of a title to orders. His uncle, the Reverend Francis Tait—who, like his father before him, had, after many years' service, obtained a living—had offered Gar his title. But a clergyman in the county of Helstonleigh had also offered him one, and Gar, thanking his uncle, chose Helstonleigh.

William's dream of ambition was fulfilled; the dream which he had *not* indulged; for it had seemed all too high and vague. He was Mr. Ashley's partner. The great firm in Helstonleigh was Ashley and Halliburton.

Ashley and Halliburton! And the event had been so gradually, so naturally led to, that Helstonleigh was not surprised when it was announced. Of course William received as yet but a small share of the profits: how small or how large was not known. Helstonleigh racked its curiosity to get at particulars, and racked it in vain. One fact was assumed beyond doubt: that a portion of the profits was secured to Henry in the event of Mr. Ashley's death.

William was now virtually the sole master of the business. Mr. Ashley had partially retired from the manufactory: at least, his visits to it were of occurrence so rare as almost to amount to retirement. Samuel Lynn was the manager, as of old; William had assumed Mr. Ashley's place and desk in the counting-house—the master. Mr. Ashley had purchased an estate, called Deoffam; and there he and his family had gone to reside. He retained his old house in the London Road, and they would visit it occasionally, and pass a week there. The change of abode did not appear to give unqualified gratification to Henry Ashley. He had become so attached to William that he could not bear to be far away from him. In the old home William's visits had been daily—or rather, nightly; in this he did not see him so often. Mary Ashley was not married—to the surprise of Helstonleigh; but Mary somewhat obstinately refused to quit the paternal home. William and his mother lived on together in the old house. But they were alone now; for he could afford to keep up its expenses, and he had insisted upon doing so; insisted that she who had worked so hard for them, should have rest, now they could work for her.

Yes, they had all worked; worked on for the end and gained it. Looking back, Jane wondered how she had struggled on. It seemed now next to an impossibility that she could have done it. Verily and truly she believed that God alone had borne her up. Had it been a foreshadowing of what was to come, when her father, years back, had warned her on the very day her marriage with Mr. Halliburton had been fixed, that it might bring many troubles upon her? Perhaps so. One thing was certain: that it had brought them, and in no common degree. But the troubles were surmounted now; and Jane's boys were turned out just as well as though she had had a thousand a year to bring them up upon. Perhaps better.

Perhaps better! How full of force is the suggestion! I wonder if nobody will let this history of the young Halliburtons read a lesson to them? Many a student, used worse by fortune and the world than he thinks he deserves, might take it to himself with profit. Do not let it be flung away as a fancy picture; endeavor to make it your reality. A career, worked out as theirs was, insures success as a necessity. 'Ah!' you may think, 'I am poor; I can't hope to achieve such things.' Poor! What were they? What's that you say? 'There are so many difficulties in the way!' Quite true; there are difficulties in the way of attaining to most things worth having; but they are only put there to be overcome. Like the hillocks and stumbling-blocks in that dream that came to Mr. Halliburton when he was dying, they are placed there to be subdued, not to be shunned in fear, or turned aside from in idleness. Whatever may be your object in life, work on for it. Be you the heir to a dukedom, or be your heritage but that of daily toil, an object you must have: a man who has none is the most miserable being on the face of the earth. Bear manfully onward and get the prize. The toil may be hard, but it will grow lighter as you advance; the impediments may be disheartening, but they are not insurmountable; the privations may be painful, but you are working on to plenty; the temptations to indolence, to flagging, to that many-headed monster, sin, may be pulling at you; but they will not stir you from your path an inch, unless you choose to let them. Only be resolute; only regard trustingly the end, and labour for it; and it will surely come. It may look in the distance so far off that the very hope of attaining it seems but a vain chimera. Never mind; bear hopefully on, and the distance will lessen palpably with every step. No real good was ever attained in this world, without working for it. No real good, as I honestly believe, was ever gained, unless God's blessing was with the endeavours for it. *Make a friend of God.* Do that, and fight your way on, doing your duty, and you will find the goal—as the sons of Mrs. Halliburton did.

Jane was sitting alone one afternoon in her parlour. She was little changed None, looking at her, could believe her old enough to be the mother of those three great men, her sons. Not that Gar was particularly great; he was but of the middle height. Jane wore a silk dress of shaded stripes, light and dark green; and her hair looked as smooth and abundant as in the old days of her girlhood. It was remarkable how little her past troubles had told upon her good looks; how little she was ageing.

She saw the postman come to the door, and Dobbs brought in a letter. 'It's Mr. Frank's writing,' grunted Dobbs.

Jane opened it, and found that Frank had been 'called.' Half his care was over.

'My darling Mother—I am made into a barrister at last. I am; and I beg you will all receive the announcement with appropriate awe and deference. I was called to-day; and I intend to have a photograph taken of myself in my wig and gown, and send it down to you as a confirmation of the fact. When you see the guy the wig makes of me, you will say you never saw an ugly man before. Tell Dobbs so; it will gladden her heart; don't you remember how she used to assure us, when boys, that we ought to be put in a glass case, as three ultra specimens of ugliness?

'I shall get on now, dearest mother. It may be a little up-hill work at first; but there's no fear. A first-rate law-firm have promised me some briefs; and one of these speedy days I shall inevitably take the ears of some court by storm—the jury struck into themselves with the learned counsel's astounding eloquence, and the bar dumb—and then my fortune's made. I need not tell you what circuit I shall patronize, or in how short a period afterwards I intend to be leading it; but I will tell you that my first object in life, when I am up in the world, shall be the ease and comfort of my dear mother. William is not going to do everything, and have you all to himself.

'Talking about William, ask him if he cannot get up some chance litigation, that I may have the honour of appearing for him next assizes. I'll do it all free, *gratis*, for nothing.

'Ever your own son,

'Frank.'

Jane started up from her chair at the news, almost like a glad child. Who could she get to share it with her? She ran into the next house to Patience. Patience limped a little in her walk still; she would limp always. Anna, in her sober

Quaker's cap, the border resting on her fair forehead, looked up from her drawing, and Jane imparted to them the news, and read the letter.

'That is nice,' said Patience. 'It must be a weight off thy mind.'

'I don't know that it is that,' replied Jane. 'I have never doubted his success. I don't doubt it still. But I am very glad.'

'I wish I had a cause to try,' cried Anna, who had recovered all her old spirits and her love of chatter. 'I would let Frank plead it for me.'

'Will you come back with me, Anna, and take tea?' said Jane. 'I shall be alone this evening. William is gone over to Deoffam Hall.'

'I'll come,' replied Anna, beginning to put up her pencils with alacrity. Truth to say, she was just as fond of going out and of taking off her cap that her curls might fall, as she used to be. She had fully recovered caste in the opinion of Helstonleigh. In fact, when the reaction set in, Helstonleigh had been rather demonstrative in its expression of repentance for having taken so harsh a view of the case. Nevertheless, it had been a real lesson to Anna, and had rendered her more sober and cautious in conduct.

Dobbs was standing at the kitchen door as they went in. 'Dobbs,' said Jane, in the gladness of her heart, 'Mr. Frank is called.'

'Called?' responded Dobbs, staring with all her might.

'Yes. He was called yesterday!'

'Him called!' repeated Dobbs, evidently doubting the fact. 'Then, ma'am, you'll excuse me, but I'm not a-going to believe it. It's a deal more likely he's gone off t'other way, than that he's called to grace.'

Anna nearly choked with laughter. Jane laughed so that she could not at once speak. 'Oh, Dobbs, I don't mean that sort of calling. He is called to the Bar. He has become a barrister.'

'Oh—that,' said Dobbs, ungraciously. 'Much good may it do him, ma'am!'

'He wears a wig and gown now, Dobbs,' put in Anna. 'He says his mother is to tell thee that it makes an ugly guy of him, and so gladden thy heart.'

'Ugh!' grunted Dobbs.

'We will make him put them on when he comes down, won't we! Dobbs, if thee'd like his picture in them, he'll send it thee.'

'He'd better keep it,' retorted Dobbs. 'I never yet saw no good in young chaps having their picturs took, Miss Anna. They be vain enough without that. Called! That would have been a new flight, that would, for *him*.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

GLIMPSE OF A BLISSFUL DREAM.

A prettier place than Deoffam Hall could not well be conceived. 'For its size,' carping people would add. Well, it was not so large as Windsor Castle; but it was no smaller than the bishop's palace at Helstonleigh—if it has been your good fortune to see that renowned edifice. Deoffam Hall was a white, moderate-sized, modern-built villa, rising in the midst of grounds charming to behold; grassy lawns smooth as velvet, winding rivulets, groves of trees affording shelter on a summer's day. On the terrace before the windows a stately peacock was fond of spreading his plumes, and in the small park—it was but a small one—the deer rubbed their antlers on the fine old trees; the deer and the peacock being the especial pets of Henry Ashley. Deoffam itself was an insignificant village; a few gentlemen's houses and a good many cottages comprising it. It was pleasantly and conveniently situated; within a walk of Helstonleigh for those who liked walking, or within a short drive. But, desirable as it was as a residence, Henry Ashley was rather addicted to grumbling at it; he would wish himself back in his old home.

One lovely morning in early summer, when they were assembled together discussing plans for the day, he suddenly broke into one of his grumbling fits. 'You bought Deoffam for me, sir,' he was beginning, 'but——'

'I bought it for myself and your mother,' interposed Mr. Ashley.

'Of course. But to descend to me afterwards—you know what I mean. I have made up my mind, when that time shall come, to send gratitude to the winds, and sell it. Stuck out here, all by myself and the peacock, with you and the mother gone, I should—— I don't like to outrage your feelings by saying what I might do.'

'There's Mary,' said Mrs. Ashley.

'Mary! I expect she'll be gone into fresh quarters by that time. She has only stopped here so long out of politeness to me.'

Mary lifted her eyes, a smile and a glow on her bright face. A lovely picture, she, in her delicate dress of summer muslin.

'I tell everybody she is devoted to me,' went on Henry, in his quaint fashion. '"Very strange that handsome girl, Mary Ashley, does not get married!" cries Helstonleigh. Mary, my dear, I know your vanity is already as extensive as it can be, so I don't fear to increase it. "My sister get married?" I say to them. "Not she! she has resolved to make a noble sacrifice of herself for my sake, and live at home with me, a vesta virgin, and see to the puddings."'

The smile left Mary's face—the glow remained. 'I do wish you would not talk nonsense, Henry! As if Helstonleigh troubled itself to make remarks upon me. It is not so rude as you are.'

'Just hark at her!' returned Henry. 'Helstonleigh not trouble itself to make remarks! When you know the town was up in arms when you refused Sir Harry Marr, and sent him packing. Such an honour had never fallen to its luck before—that one of its fair citizens, born and bred, should get the chance of becoming a real live My Lady.'

Mary was cutting a pencil at the moment, and cut the point off. 'Papa,' cried she, turning her hot face to his, 'can't you make Henry talk sense?—if he must talk at all.'

Mrs Ashley interposed. It was quite true that Mary had had, as Henry phrased it, a chance of becoming a 'real live My Lady;' and there lurked in Mrs. Ashley's heart a shade of grievance, of disappointment, that she should have refused the honour. She spoke rather sharply, taking Henry's part, not Mary's.

'Henry is talking nothing but sense. My opinion is, that you behaved quite rudely to Sir Harry. It is an offer that you will not have again, Mary. Still,' added Mrs. Ashley, modifying her tone a little, 'it is no business of Helstonleigh's; neither do I see whence the town could have derived its knowledge.'

'As if there could be any news stirring, good or bad, that Helstonleigh does not ferret its way to!' returned Henry.

'My belief is, that Henry took and told,' retorted Mary.

'I! what next?' cried Henry. 'As if I should tell of the graceless doings of my sister! It is bad enough to lie under the weighty knowledge oneself.'

'And as if I should ever consent to marry Sir Harry Marr!' returned Mary, with a touch of her brother's spirit.

'Mary,' said Mr. Ashley, quietly, 'you seemed to slip out of that business, and of all questioning over it, as smoothly as an eel. I never came to the bottom of it. What was your objection to Sir Harry?'

'Objection, papa?' she faltered, with a crimsoned face. 'I—I did not care for him.'

'Oh, that was it, was it?' returned Mr. Ashley.

'Is it always to go on so, my dear?' asked her mother.

Poor Mary was in sad confusion, scarcely knowing whether to burst into anger or into tears. 'What do you mean, mamma? How "go on?"'

'This rejection of everybody. You have had three good offers——'

'Not counting the venture of Cyril Dare,' put in Henry.

'And you say "No" to all,' concluded Mrs. Ashley. 'I fear you must be over-fastidious.'

'And she's growing into an old maid, and——'

'Be quiet, then, Henry. Can't you leave me in peace?'

'My dear, it is true,' cried Henry, who was in one of his teasing moods. 'Of course I have not kept count of your age since you were eighteen—it wouldn't be polite to do so; but my private conviction is, that you are four-and-twenty this blessed summer.'

'If I were four-and-thirty,' answered Mary, 'I'd not marry Sir Harry Marr. I am not *obliged* to marry, I suppose, am I?'

'My dear, nobody said you were,' said Henry, flinging a rose at her, which he took from his button-hole. 'But don't you see that this brings round my argument, that you have resolved to make yourself a noble sisterly sacrifice, and stop at home with me? Don't you take to cats yet, though?'

Mary thought she was getting the worst of it, and quitted the room. Soon afterwards Mrs. Ashley was called out by a servant.

'Did you get a note from William this morning, sir?' asked Henry.

'Yes,' replied Mr. Ashley, taking it from his pocket. 'He mentions in it that there is a report current in the town that Herbert Dare is dead.'

'Herbert Dare! I wonder if it's true?'

'It is to hoped not. I fear he was not very fit to die. I am going into Helstonleigh, and shall probably hear more.'

'Oh! are you going in to-day, sir? Despatch William back, will you?'

'I don't know, Henry. They may be busy at the manufactory. 'If so, I am sure he will not leave it.'

'What a blessing if that manufactory were up in the clouds!' was Henry's rejoinder. 'When I want William particularly, it is sure to be—that manufactory!'

'It is well William does not think as you do,' remarked Mr. Ashley.

'Well, sir, he must certainly think Samuel Lynn a nonentity, or he would not stick himself so closely to business. You never applied yourself in such a way.'

'Yes, I did. But you must please to remember, Master Henry, that the cases are not on a parallel. I was head and chief of all, accountable to none. Had I chosen to take a twelvemonth's holiday, and let the business go, it would

have been my own affair exclusively. Whether the business went right, or whether it went wrong, I was accountable to none. William is not in that position.'

'I know he is often in the position not to be had when he is wanted,' was Henry's reply, as he listlessly turned over some books that lay on the table.

'Will you go into town with me?'

'I could not stand it to-day. My hip is giving me twinges.'

'Is it? I had better bring back Parry.'

'No. I won't have him, unless I find there's actual need. The mother knows what to do with me. I don't suppose it will come to anything; and I have been so much better of late.'

'Yes, you have. Although you quarrel with Dearham, it is the change to it—the air of the place—that has renewed your health, you ungrateful boy!'

Mr. Ashley's eyes were bent lovingly on Henry's as he said it. Henry seized his father's hands, his half-mocking tone exchanged for one of earnestness.

'Not ungrateful, sir—far from it. I know the value of my dear father: that a kinder or a better one son could not possess I shall grumble on to my life's end. It is my amusement. But the grumbling is from my lips only: not from my fractious spirit, as it was in days gone by.'

'I have remarked that; remarked it with deep thankfulness. You have acquired a victory over that fractious spirit.'

'For which the chief thanks are due to William Halliburton. Sir, it is so. But for him, it is most probable I should have gone, a discontented wretch, to the—let me be poetical for once—silent tomb: never seeking out either the light or the love that may be found in this world.'

Mr. Ashley glanced at his son. He saw that he was contending with emotion, although he had reassumed his bantering tone.

'Henry, what light—what love?'

'The light and the love that a man may take into his own spirit. He—William—told me years ago, that I might make even my life a pleasant and a useful one; and measureless was the ridicule I cast upon him for it. But I have found that he was right. When William came to the house one night, a humble errand-boy, sent by Samuel Lyon with a note—do you remember it, sir?—and offered to help me, dunce that I was, with my Latin exercise—a help I graciously condescended to accept—we little thought what a blessing had entered the dwelling.'

'We little thought what a brave, honest, indomitable spirit was enshrined in the humble errand-boy,' continued Mr. Ashley.

'He has got on as he deserved. He will be a worthy successor to you, sir: a second Thomas Ashley; a far better one than I should ever have been, had I possessed the rudest health. There's only one thing more for William to gain, and then I expect he will be at rest.'

'What's that?'

'Oh, it's no concern of mine, sir. If folks can't manage for themselves, they need not come to me to help them.'

Mr. Ashley looked keenly at his son. Henry passed to another topic.

'Do send him here, sir, when you get in; or else drive him back with you.'

'I shall see,' said Mr. Ashley. 'Do you know where your mother went to?'

'After some domestic catastrophe, I expect. Martha came, with a face as green as the peacock's tail, and beckoned her out. The best dinner-service come to grief, perhaps.'

Mr. Ashley rang, and ordered the pony carriage to be got ready: one bought chiefly for Henry, that he might drive into town. Before he started, he came across Mary. She stood at one of the corridor windows up stairs, and had evidently been crying.

'What is your grief, Mary?'

She turned to the sheltering arm open to her, and tried to choke the tears down, which were again rising. 'I wish you and mamma would not keep so angry at my refusing Sir Harry Marr.'

'Who told you I was angry, Mary?'

'Oh, papa, I fancied so this morning. Mamma is angry about it, and it pains me. It is as though you wanted me gone.'

'My dear child! Gone! For our comfort I could wish you might never go, Mary. But for your own, it may be different.'

'I do not wish to go,' she sobbed. 'I want to stay at home always. It was not my fault, papa, that I could not like Sir Harry.'

'You should never, by my consent, marry any one you did not like, Mary; not if it were the greatest match in the three kingdoms. Why this distress, my dear? Mamma's vexation will blow over. She thought—as Henry tells us—to see you converted into a "real live My Lady." "My daughter, Lady Marr!" It will blow over, child.'

Mary cried in silence. 'And you will not let me be driven away, papa? You will keep me at home, always?'

'Mr. Ashley shook his head. 'Always is a long day, Mary. Somebody may be coming, less distasteful than Sir Harry Marr, who will induce you to leave it.'

'No, never, papa!' cried she, somewhat more vehemently than the case seemed to warrant.

'Should anybody be asking you for me, you can tell them "No," at once; do not trouble to bring the news to me.'

'*Any*body, Mary?'

'Yes, papa, no matter who. Do not drive me away from you.'

He stooped and kissed her. She stood at the window still, in a dreamy attitude, and watched the carriage drive off with Mr. Ashley Presently Henry passed.

'Has the master gone, do you know, Mary?'

'Five minutes ago.'

'I hope and trust he'll send back William.'

It was striking half-past two when Mr. Ashley entered the manufactory. Samuel Lynn was in his own room, sorting gloves; William was in the counting-house, seated at his desk. His, now; formerly Mr. Ashley's; the very desk from which the cheque had disappeared; but William took a more active part in the general management than Mr. Ashley had ever done. He rose, shook hands with the master, and placed a chair for him. The 'master' still he was called; indeed, he actually was so; William, 'Mr. Halliburton.'

A short while given to business details, and then Mr. Ashley referred to the report of Herbert Dare's death. Poor Herbert Dare had never returned from abroad, and it was to be feared he had been getting lower and lower in the scale of society. Under happier auspices, and with different rearing, Herbert might have made a happier and a better man. Helstonleigh did not know how he lived abroad, or why he stayed there. Possibly the free and easy continental life had become necessary to him. Homburg, Baden-Baden, Wiesbaden, wherever there were gaming-tables, there might be found Herbert Dare. That he must find a living at them in some way, seemed pretty evident. It was a great pity.

'How did you hear that he was dead?' inquired Mr. Ashley.

'From Richard Winthorne,' replied William. 'I met him yesterday evening in Guild Street, and he told me a report had come over that Herbert Dare had died of fever.'

As William spoke, a gentleman entered the room, and interrupted them—a Captain Chambers.

'Have you heard that Herbert Dare's dead?' was his first greeting.

'Is it certain?' asked Mr. Ashley.

'I don't know. Report says it is certain; but report is not always to be believed How that family has gone down,' continued Captain Chambers 'Anthony first; now Herbert; and Cyril will be the next. He will go out of the world in some disreditable way. A wretched scamp! Shocking habits! Old Dare, too, unless I am mistaken, is on his last legs.'

'Is he ill?' inquired Mr. Ashley.

'No; no worse than usual; but I never saw a man so broken. I alluded to the legs of his prosperity. Talk about reports, though,' and Captain Chambers suddenly wheeled round on William, 'there's one going the round of the town to-day about you.'

'What's that?' asked William. 'Not that I am dead, I suppose, or on my last legs?'

'Something better. That you are going to marry Sophy Glenn.'

William looked all amazement, an amused smile stealing over his lips.

'Well, I never?' uttered he, using a phrase just then in vogue in Helstonleigh. 'What has put that in the town's head?'

'You should best know that,' said Captain Chambers. 'Did you not, for one thing, beau Miss Sophy to a concert last night? Come, Master William, guilty or not guilty?'

'Guilty of the beauing,' answered William. 'I called on the Glenns yesterday evening, and found them starting for the concert; so I accompanied them. I did give my arm to Sophy.'

'And whispered the sweet words, "Will you be my charming wife?"'

'No, that I did not,' said William. 'And I daresay I shall never whisper them to any woman born yet; if it will give Helstonleigh satisfaction to know so much.'

'You might go farther and fare worse, than in taking Sophy Glenn, I can tell you that, Master William,' returned Captain Chambers. 'Remember, she is the lucky one of the three sisters, and had the benignant godmother. Sophy Glenn counts five thousand pounds to her fortune.'

When Captain Chambers took his departure, Mr. Ashley looked at William.

'I have heard Henry joke you about the Glenn girls—nice little girls they are, too. Is there any thing in it, William?'

'Sir! How can you ask such a thing?'

'I think, with Chambers, that a man might do worse than marry Sophy Glenn.'

'So do I, sir. But I shall not be the man.'

'Well, I think it is time you contemplated something of the sort. You will soon be thirty years of age.'

'Yes, sir, but I do not intend to marry.'

'Why not?' asked Mr. Ashley.

'Because—I fear my wishes would lead me to soar too high. That is, I—I—mean—' He stopped; he seemed to be getting into inextricable confusion. A notable thing for the self-possessed William Halliburton.

'Do you mean that you have an attachment in some quarter?' resumed Mr. Ashley.

William's face turned of a fiery red.

'I cannot deny it, sir,' he answered, after considerable hesitation.

'And that she is above your reach?'

'Yes.'

'In what manner? In position—or by any insurmountable obstacle? I suppose she is not somebody else's wife?'

William smiled.

'Oh, no—in position.'

'Shall I give you my opinion, William, without knowing the case in detail?'

William was standing at one corner of the mantel-piece, his arm leaning on its narrow shelf. He did not lift his eyes.

'Yes, sir, if you please.'

'Then I think there is scarcely any marriageable girl in the county to whom you might not aspire, and in time win.'

'Oh, Mr. Ashley.'

'Is it the daughter of the lord-lieutenant?'

William laughed.

'Is it the bishop's daughter?'

William shook his head.

'She seems to be as far removed from me.'

'Come, I must know, who is it?'

'It is impossible that I can tell you, sir.'

'I must know; I don't think I have ever asked you in vain, since the time when, a boy, you confessed your thoughts about the found shilling. Secrets from me! I will know, William!'

William did not answer. The upper part of his face was concealed by his hand; but Mr. Ashley marked the sweet smile that played around his mouth.

'Come, I will help you. Is it the charming-mannered Dobbs?'

Amused, he took his hand from his face.

'Well, sir—no.'

'It cannot be Charlotte East, because she is married.'

William seemed as impervious as ever. The master suddenly laid his hand upon his shoulder, and confronted him face to face.

'Is it Mary Ashley?'

The burning flush of scarlet that dyed his face, even to the very roots of his hair, told Mr. Ashley the truth, far more effectually than words could have done. There ensued a pause. Mr. Ashley was the first to break it.

'How long have you loved her?'

'For years—*that* has been the wild dream of my aspirations: one that I knew would never be realized,' he answered, suffering his eyes to meet for a moment Mr. Ashley's.

'Have you spoken to her of it?'

'Never.'

'Or led her to believe you loved her?'

'No, sir—unless my looks and tones may have betrayed me. I fear they have—but it was not intentionally done.'

'Honest in this, as in all else,' thought Mr. Ashley. 'What am I to say to you?' he asked aloud.

'I do not know,' sighed William. 'I expect, of course, sir, that you will forbid me Deoffam Hall; but I can still meet Henry at the house in town. I hope you will forgive me,' he added, in an impassioned tone. 'I could not help loving her—before I knew what my new feelings meant, love had come. Such love! Had I been in a position to marry her, I would have made her life one dream of happiness. When I awoke to it all——'

'What awoke you?' was the interruption.

'I think it was Cyril Dare's asking for her. I debated with myself then, whether I ought to give up going to your house, but I came to the conclusion that, so long as I was able to hide my feelings from her, I need not banish myself. My judgment was wrong, I know; but the temptation to see her occasionally was great, and I did not resist it.'

'And so you continued to go, feeding the flame?'

'Yes. Feeding it passionately and hopelessly; never forgetting that the shock of separation must come.'

'Did you hear of Sir Harry Marr's offer to her?'

'Yes, I heard of it.'

William swept his hand across his face as he spoke. It wore a *wrung* expression. Mr. Ashley changed his tone.

'William, I cannot decide this matter, one way or the other. You must ask Mary to do that.'

'*Sir!*'

'If Mary chooses to favour you more than she does other suitors, I will not forbid her doing it. Only this very day she begged me, with tears, to keep all such troublesome customers away from her; to refuse them of my own accord. But it strikes me that you may as well get an answer from herself.'

William, his whole soul in his eyes, was gazing at Mr. Ashley. He could not tell whether he might believe; whether he were awake or dreaming.

'Did I deliver you a message from Henry?'

'No, sir,' was the abstracted response.

'He wants you to go over to him. I said I would send you if you were not busy. He is not very well to-day.'

'But—Mr. Ashley—did you mean what you said?'

'Should I have said it had I not meant it?' was the quiet answer. 'Have you a difficulty in believing it?'

The ingenuous light rose to William's eyes, as he raised them to his master's.

'I have no money,' he whispered. 'I cannot settle a farthing upon her.'

'You have something better than money, William—worth. And I can settle. Go and hear what Mary says. You will catch the half-past three o'clock coach, if you make haste.'

William went out, believing still that he must be in a trance. His deeply buried dream of the long past years; was it about, indeed, to become reality?

But in the midst of it, he could not help casting a thought to a less pleasing subject—the Dares. Herbert was young to die; he was, no doubt, unprepared to die; and William sincerely hoped that the report would prove untrue. The Dares were going down sadly in the social scale; Cyril especially. He was just what Captain Chambers had called him—a scamp. After leaving Mr. Ashley's, he had entered his father's office; as a temporary thing, it was said; but he had never quitted it for anything else. A great deal of his time was passed in public-houses. George, whose commission never came, had gone out, some two or three years ago, to the port of Sydney. His sister Julia and her husband had settled there, and they had found an opening for George. William walked on, thinking of the Dares' position and of his.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WAYS AND MEANS.

When William reached Deoffam Hall, he found Henry Ashley alone, lying in the drawing-room, the sofa near the open window.

'That's good!' cried he. 'Good of the master for sending you, and of you for coming.'

'You don't look well to-day,' observed William. 'Your brow has the old lines of pain in it.'

'Thanks to my hip, which is giving me threatening twinges. What's this report about Dare? Is it confirmed?'

'Not absolutely. It was Winthorne told me. Captain Chambers came into the manufactory, and spoke of it this afternoon.'

'I dare say it's true,' said Henry. 'I wonder if Anna Lynn will put on weeds for him?' he sarcastically added.

'Quakers don't wear weeds.'

'Teach your grandmother,' returned Henry, lapsing into one of those free, popular phrases he indulged in, and *was* indulged in. 'How you stare at me! Do you think I am not *cured*? Ay; years ago.'

'You'd have no objection to see Anna marry, I suppose?'

'She's welcome to marry, for me. You may go and propose to her yourself, if you like. I'll be groomsman at the wedding.'

'Would the alliance give you pleasure?'

Henry laughed. 'You'd deserve hanging in chains, if you did enter upon it; that's all.'

'I have had one wife assigned to me to-day,' remarked William.

'Whom may she be?'

'Sophy Glenn.'

'Sophy Glenn?'

'Sophy Glenn. Chambers gravely assured me that Helstonleigh had settled the match. He, Chambers, considers that I may go farther and fare worse. Mr. Ashley said the same.'

'But what do *you* say?' cried Henry, rising up on his sofa, and speaking quite sharply.

'I? Oh, I shall consider of it.'

At that moment Mary Ashley appeared on the terrace outside; a small basket and a pair of scissors in her hand. Henry called to her. 'Are you going to cut more flowers?'

'Yes. Mamma has sent the others away. She said they were fading.' Seeing William there, she nodded to him, her colour rising.'

'I say, Mary—he has come here to bring some news,' went on Henry. What do you suppose it is?'

'Mamma has told me. About Herbert Dare.'

'Not that. He is going to make himself into a respectable man, and marry Sophy Glenn. He came here to announce it. Don't cut too much of that syringa; its sweetness is overpowering in a room.'

Mary walked away. William felt excessively annoyed. 'You are more dangerous than a child!' he exclaimed. 'What made you say that?'

And Henry, like a true child, fell back, laughing aloud. 'I say, though, comrade, where are you off to?' he called after William, who was leaving the room.

'To cut the flowers for your sister, of course.'

But when William reached Mary Ashley, she had apparently forgotten her errand. Standing in a dark spot against the trunk of the acacia tree, her face was white and still, and the basket lay on the ground. She picked it up, and would have hastened away, but William caught her hand and placed it within his arm, little less agitated than she was.

'Not to tell him that news,' he whispered. 'I did indeed come here, hoping to solicit one to be my wife; but it was not Sophy Glenn. Mary, you cannot mistake what my feelings have long been.'

'But—papa?' she gasped, unable to control her emotion.

He looked at her; he made her look at him. What strange, happy light was that in his earnest eyes, causing her heart to bound? 'Mr. Ashley sent me to you,' he softly whispered.

Henry lay and waited till he was tired. No William, no Mary; no flowers; no anything. Had they both gone to sleep? He arose; and, taking his stick, limped away to see after them. But he searched the flower garden in vain.

In the sheltered shrubbery, pacing it leisurely, as close together as they could well be linked, were they; a great deal too much occupied with each other to pay attention to anything else. The basket lay on the ground, empty of all, save the scissors.

'Well, you two are a nice lot for a summer's day!' began Henry, after his own fashion, and using his own astonished eyes. 'What of the flowers?'

Mary would have flown, but William held her tightly, and led her up to her brother. He strove to speak jestingly; but his voice betrayed his emotion.

'Henry, shall it be your sister, or Sophy Glenn?'

'So! you have been settling it for yourselves, have you! I would not be in your shoes, Miss Ashley, when the parental thunderbolts shall descend. Was this what you flung the baronet over for? There never was any accounting for taste in this world, and there never will be. I ask you where the flowers are, and I should like an answer.'

'I will cut them now,' said William. 'Will you come?' he asked, holding out his arm to Henry.

'No,' replied Henry, sitting down on the shrubbery bench, 'I must digest this shock first. You two will be enough to cut them, I dare say.'

They walked away towards the flower-garden. But ere they had gone many steps he called out, and they turned.

'Mary! before you tie yourself up irrevocably, I hope you will reflect upon the ignominy of his being nothing on earth but a manufacturer. A pretty come down, that, for the Lady Marr who might have been!'

He was in one of his most ironical moods; a sure sign that his inward state was that of glowing satisfaction. This had been his hope for years—his plan, it may be said; but he had kept himself silent and neutral. As he sat there ruminating, he heard the distant sound of the pony carriage; and, taking a short cut, met it in the park. Mr. Ashley handed the reins to his groom, got out, and gave his arm to Henry.

'How are you by this time?'

'Better, sir. Nothing much to brag of.'

'I thought William would have been with you. Is he not come?'

'Yes, he is come. But I am second with him to-day. Miss Mary's first.'

'Oh, indeed!' returned Mr. Ashley.

'They are gone off somewhere, under the pretext of cutting flowers. I don't think the flowers were quite the object, though.'

He stole a glance at his father as he spoke. But he gathered nothing. And he dashed at once into the subject he had at heart.

'Father, you will not stand in their light! It will be a crushing blow to both, if you do. Let him have her! There's not a man in the world half as worthy.'

But still Mr. Ashley made no rejoinder. Henry scarcely gave him time to make one.

'I have seen it a long while. I have seen how Halliburton kept down his feelings, not being sure of the ground with you. I fear that to-day they must have overmastered him; for he has certainly spoken out. Dear father, don't make two of the best spirits in the world miserable, by withholding your consent!'

'Henry,' said Mr. Ashley, turning to him with a smile, 'do you fancy William Halliburton is one to have spoken out without my consent?'

Henry's thin cheek flushed. 'Did you give it him? Have you already given it him?'

'I gave it him to-day. I drew from him the fact of his attachment to Mary; not telling him in so many words that he should have her, but leaving it for her to decide.

'Then it will be; for I have seen where Miss Mary's love has been. How immeasurably you have relieved me!' continued Henry. 'The last half hour I have been seeing nothing but perplexity and cross-grained guardians.'

'Have you?' returned Mr. Ashley. 'You should have brought a little common sense to bear upon the subject, Henry.'

'But my fear was, sir, that you would not bring the common sense to bear,' freely spoke Henry.

'You do not quite understand me. Had I entertained an insuperable objection to Mary's becoming his wife, do you suppose I should have been so wanting in prudence and forethought as to have allowed opportunity for an attachment to ripen? I have long believed that there was no man within the circle of my acquaintance, or

without it, so deserving of Mary, except in fortune; therefore I suffered him to come here, with my eyes open as to what might be the result. A very probable result, it has appeared to me. I would forgive any girl who fell in love with William Halliburton.'

'And what about ways and means?'

'William's share shall be increased, and Mary will not go to him dowerless. They must live in our house in Helstonleigh; and when we want to go there we must be their guests.'

'It will be the working out of my visions,' said Henry, in a low, deep tone. 'I have seen them in it in fancy; in that very house; and myself with them, my home when I please. I think you have been planning for me, as much as for them.'

'Not exactly, Henry. I have not planned. I have only let things take their course. It will be happier for you, my boy, than if she had gone from us to be Lady Marr.'

'Oh! if ever I felt inclined to smother a man, it was that Marr. I never, you know, brought myself to be decently civil to him. There's no answering for the vanity of maidens, and I thought it just possible he might put William's nose out of joint. What will the mother say?'

'The mother will be divided,' said Mr. Ashley, a smile crossing his face. 'She likes William; but she likes a title. We must allow her a day or two to get over it. I will go and give her the tidings now, if Mary has not.'

'Mary is with her lovier,' returned Henry. 'She can't have dragged herself away from him yet.'

Mary, however, was not with her 'lovier.' As Mr. Ashley crossed the hall, he met her. She stopped in hesitation, and coloured vividly.

'Well, Mary, I soon sent you a candidate; though it was in defiance of your express orders. Did I do right?'

Mary burst into tears, and Mr. Ashley drew her face to him. 'May God bless your future and his, my child!'

'I am afraid to tell mamma,' she sobbed. 'I think she will be angry. I could not help liking him.'

'Why, that is the very excuse he made to me! Neither can I help liking him, Mary. I will tell mamma.'

Mrs. Ashley received the tidings, not altogether with equanimity. As Mr. Ashley had surmised, she was divided between conflicting opinions. She liked and admired William; but she equally liked and admired a title and fortune.

'Such a position to relinquish—the union with Sir Harry!'

'Had she married Sir Harry we should have lost her,' said Mr. Ashley.

'Lost her!'

'To be sure we should. She would have gone to her new home, twelve miles on the other side Helstonleigh, amidst her new connections, and have been lost to us, save for a formal visit now and then. As it is, we shall keep her, at her old home.'

'Yes, there's a great deal to be said on both sides,' acknowledged Mrs. Ashley. 'What does Henry say?'

'That he thinks I have been planning to secure his happiness. Had Mary married away, we—when we quit this scene—must have left him to his lonely self; now, we shall leave him to them. Things are wisely ordered,' impressively added Mr. Ashley; 'in this, as in all else. Margaret, let us accept them, and be grateful.'

Mrs. Ashley went to seek William. 'You will be a loving husband to her,' she said with agitation. 'You will take care of her and cherish her?'

'With the best endeavours of my whole life,' he fervently answered, as he took Mrs. Ashley's hands in his.

It was a happy group that evening. Henry lay on his sofa in complacent ease. Mary pulled down beside him, and William leaning over its back, while Mr. and Mrs. Ashley sat at a distance, partially out of hearing.

'Have you heard what the master says?' asked Henry. 'He thinks you have been getting up your bargain out of complaisance to me. You are aware, I hope, Mr. William, that whoever takes Mary must take me?'

'I am perfectly willing.'

'It is well you are! And—do you know where you are to live?'

William shook his head. 'You can understand how all these future considerations have weighed me down,' he said, glancing at Mary.

'You are to live at the house in Helstonleigh. It's to be converted into yours by some patent process. The master had an eye to this, I know, when he declined to take out any of the furniture, upon our removal here. The house is to be yours, and the run of it is to be mine; and I shall grumble away to my heart's content at you both. What do you answer to that, Mr. William? I don't ask her; she's nobody.'

'I can only answer that the more you run in it, the better pleased we shall be. And we can stand any extent of grumbling.'

'I am glad you can. You ought to by this time, for you have been pretty well seasoned to it. So, in the Helstonleigh house, remember, my old rooms are mine; and I intend to be the plague of your lives. After a time—may it be a long

time!—I suppose it will be "Mr. Halliburton of Deoffam Hall."'

'What nonsense you talk, Henry!'

'Nonsense? I shall make it over to you. Catch me sticking myself out here in solitary state to the admiration of the peacock! What's the matter with you now, you two? Oh, well, if you turn up your noses at Deoffam, it shall never be yours. I'll leave it to the eldest chickabiddy. And mark you, please! I shall have him named "Ashley," and stand his godfather; and he'll be mine, and not yours. I shall do just as I like with the whole lot, if they count a score, and spoil them as much as I choose.'

'What *is* the matter there?' exclaimed Mrs. Ashley, perceiving a commotion on the sofa.

Mary succeeded in freeing herself, and went away with a red face. 'Mamma, I think Henry must be going out of his mind! He is talking so absurdly.'

'Absurdly! Was what I said absurd, William!'

William laughed. 'It was premature, at any rate.'

Henry stretched up his hands and laid hold of William's. 'It is true what Mary says—that I must be going out of my mind. So I am: with joy.'

But the report of Herbert Dare's death proved to be a false one.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DREAM REALIZED.

The approaching marriage of William Halliburton gave rise to a dispute. A dispute of love, though, not of bitterness. Frank and Gar contended which should get their mother. William no longer wanted her; he was going to a home of his own. Frank wished to take larger chambers, where she would find accommodation; he urged half a hundred reasons; his grievances with his laundress, and his buttonless shirts. Gar, who was in priest's orders now, had remained in that same first curacy, at a hundred a year and the parsonage house to live in. He said he had been wanting his mother all along, and he could not do without her.

Jane inclined to Gar. She said she had a notion that old ladies—how they would have rebelled at hearing her call herself old!—were out of place in a young barrister's chambers; and she had a further notion that chambers were but comfortless quarters to live in. The question was to be decided when they met at William's wedding. Frank was getting on well; better than the ordinary run of aspirants; he had come through Helstonleigh two or three times on circuit, and had picked up odds and ends of briefs at it.

Meanwhile William took possession of Mr. Ashley's old house, and the wedding day approached. Besides her boys, Jane had another visitor for the time; her brother Francis, who came down to marry them. Perhaps because the Vicar of Deoffam had recently died. He might have come all the same, had that gouty old gentleman been still alive.

All clear and cloudless rose the September sun on Deoffam; never a brighter sun shone on a wedding. It was a very quiet wedding; but few guests being invited to it. Mary, in her white lace robes and her floating veil—flushed, timid, lovely—stood with her bridesmaids; not more lovely than one of those bridesmaids; for one was Anna Lynn.

Anna Lynn! Yes; Anna Lynn. To the lasting scandal of Patience, Anna stood in the open church, dressed in bridesmaid's clothes. Mary, who had not been permitted the same intimacy with Anna since that marked and unhappy time, but who had loved her all along, had been allowed by Mrs. Ashley to choose her for one of her bridesmaids. The invitation was proffered, and Samuel Lynn did not see fit to decline it. Patience was indignantly rebellious; Anna, wild with delight. Look at her, as she stands there! flowing robes of white around her, not made after the primitive fashion of *her* robes, but in the fashion of the day; and her falling hair shades her carmine cheeks, and her blue eyes seek modestly the ground. A fair picture; and a dangerous one to Henry Ashley, had those old feelings of his remained in the ascendant. But he was cured; as he told William; and he told it in truth.

A short while, and Anna would want bridesmaids on her own account; though that may be speaking metaphorically of a Quakeress. Anna's pretty face had pierced the heart of one of their male body; and he had asked for Anna in marriage. A very desirable male, was he, in a social point of view: and female Helstonleigh turned up its nose in envy at Anna's fortune. He was considerably older than Anna: a fine-looking man and a wealthy one, engaged in wholesale business. His name was Gurney; his residence, outside the city, was a handsome one, replete with every comfort; and he drove a carriage-and-pair. He had been for some time a visitor at Samuel Lynn's, and Anna had learned to like him. That his object in visiting there could only be Anna, everybody had been sure of, his position being so superior to Samuel Lynn's. Everybody but Anna. Some-

how, since that past escapade, Anna had not cast a thought to marrying, or to the probability of anybody's asking her; and she did not suspect his intentions. If she had suspected them, she might have set herself against him; for there was a little spice of opposition in her, which she loved to indulge. However, before that suspicion came to her, she had grown to care for him too much to play the coquette. Strange to stay, there was something in his figure and in the outline if his face, which put people in mind of Herbert Dare; but his features and their expression were quite different.

It was a most excellent match for Anna; there was no doubt of that; but it did not afford complete satisfaction to Patience. Patience felt a foreboding conviction that he would be a great deal more indulgent to Anna than she considered was wholesomely good for her; Patience had a misgiving that Anna would be putting off her caps as she chose, then, and would not be reprimanded for it. Not unlikely; could that future bridegroom, Charles Gurney, see Anna as she stands now! for a more charming picture never was seen.

William, quiet and self-possessed received Mary from the hands of her father, who gave her away The Reverend Francis Tait read the service, and Gar, in his white canonicals, stood with him, after the new fashion of the day. They'll soon be for having as many clergymen as bridesmaids! Jane's tears dropped on her pearl-grey damask dress; Frank made himself very busy amongst the bridesmaids; and Henry Ashley was in his most mocking mood. Thus they were made man and wife; and Mr. Tait's voice rose high and echoed down the aisles of the little old church at Deoffam, as he spoke the solemn injunction—'THOSE WHOM GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER.'

Helstonleigh's streets were lined that day, and Helstonleigh's windows were alive with heads. It was known that the bride and bridegroom would pass through the town, on the first stage of their bridal tour, whose ultimate destination was to be the Continent. The whole crowd of the Ashley workpeople had gathered outside the manufactory, neglecting their afternoon's work; a neglect which Samuel Lynn not only winked at, but participated in, for he stood with them. As the carriage, which was Mr. Ashley's, came in sight, its four horses urged by the postilions to a sharp trot, one deafening cheer arose from the men. William laughed and nodded to them; but they did not get half a good view of the master's daughter beside him: nothing but a glimpse of a flushed cheek, and a piece of a white veil.

Slouching, at the corner of a street, in a seedy coat, his eyes bloodshot, was Cyril Dare. Never did one look more of a *mauvais sujet*, than he, as he watched the chariot pass. The place, now occupied by William, might have been his; had he so willed it and worked for it. Not, perhaps, that of Mary's husband; he could not be sure of that, but as Mr. Ashley's partner. A bitter cloud of disappointment, of repentance, crossed his face as he looked at them. They both saw him standing there; did Mary think what a promising husband he would have made her? Cyril flung a word after them; and it was not a blessing.

Dobbs had also flung something after them, and in point of time and precedence this ought to have been mentioned first. Patience, watching from her window, curious as everybody else, had seen Dobbs come out with something under her apron, and take up her station at the gate, where she waited patiently for just an hour and a quarter. As the carriage had come in view, Dobbs sheltered herself behind the shrubs, nothing to be seen of her above them, but her cap and eyes. The moment the carriage was past, out flew Dobbs to the middle of the road, Patience's impression being that she was going to hang on behind. No such thing. Bringing forth from their hiding-place a pair of shoes considerably the worse for wear, the one possessing no sole, and the other no upper-leather. Dobbs dashed them with force after the chariot, very much discomposing the man-servant in the rear, whose head they struck.

'Nothing like old shoes to bring 'em luck,' grunted Dobbs to Patience, as she retired in doors. 'I never knew good come of a wedding that didn't get 'em.'

'I wish them luck, the luck of a safe arrival home from those unpleasant foreign parts,' emphatically remarked Patience, who had found her residence amongst the French nothing less than a species of terrestrial purgatory.'

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BISHOP'S LETTER.

A DAY OR two after the wedding, a letter was delivered at Mrs. Halliburton's residence, addressed to Gar. Its seal, a mitre, prepared Gar to find that it came from the Bishop of Helstonleigh. Its contents proved to be a mandate, commanding his attendance the following morning at the palace at nine o'clock. Gar turned nervous. Had he fallen under his bishop's displeasure, and was about to be reprimanded? Mr. Tait had

gone back to London; Gar was to leave on the following day, Saturday; Frank meant to stay on for a week or two. It was his vacation.

'That's Gar all over!' cried Frank, who had perched himself on a side table. 'Gar is sure to go to the dark side of things; instead of the bright. If the Lord Chancellor sent for me, I should set it down that my fortune was about to be made. His lordship's going to present you with a living, Gar.'

'That's good!' retorted Gar. 'What interest have I with the bishop?'

'He has known you long enough.'

'As he has many others. If the bishop interested himself for all the clergymen who have been educated at Helstonleigh college school, he would have enough upon his hands. I expect it is to find fault with me for some unconscious offence.'

'Go it, Gar—you'll get no sleep to-night.'

'Frank, I must say the note appears to be a peremptory one,' remarked Jane.

'Middling for that. It's short, if not sweet.'

Whether Gar got any sleep or not, that night, he did not say; but he started to keep the appointment punctually. His mother and Frank remained together, and Jane fell into a bit of quiet talk, over the breakfast table.

'Frank,' said she, 'I am often uneasy about you.'

'About me!' cried Frank, in considerable wonderment.

'If you were to go wrong! I know what the temptations of a London life must be. Especially to a young man who has, so to say, no home.'

'I steer clear of them. Mother darling, I am telling you the truth,' he added earnestly. 'Do you think we could ever fall away from such training as yours? No. Look at what William is; look at Gar; and for myself, though I don't like to boast, I assure you, the Anti-ill-doing-Society—if you have ever heard of that respected body—might hoist me on a pedestal at Exeter Hall, as their choice model. You don't like my joking! Believe me, then, in all seriousness, that your sons will never fail you. We did not battle on in our duty as boys, to forget it as men. You taught us the bravest lesson that a mother can teach, or a child learn, when you contrived to impress upon us the truth that God is our witness always, ever present.'

Jane's eyes filled with tears; not of grief. She knew that Frank was speaking from his heart.

'And you are getting on well?'

'What with stray briefs that come to me, and my literary work, and the fellowship, I make six or seven hundred a year already.'

'I hope you are not spending it all?'

'That I am not. I put by all I can. It is true that I don't live upon dry bread and potatoes six days in the week, as you know we have done; but I take care that my expenses are moderate. It is the keeping hare-brained follies at arm's length that enables me to save.'

'And now, Frank, for another question. What made you send me that hundred-pound note?'

'I shall send you another soon,' was all Frank's answer. 'The idea of my gaining a superfluity of money, and sending none to my darling mother.'

'But indeed I don't know what to do with it, Frank. I do not require it.'

'Then put it by to look at. As long as I have brains to work with, I shall think of my mother. Have you forgotten how she worked for us? I wish you would come and live with me.'

Jane entered into all the arguments why she deemed she should be better with Gar. Not the least of them was, that she should still be near Helstonleigh. Of all her sons, Jane, perhaps unconsciously to herself, most loved her eldest; and to go far away from him would have been another trouble.

By-and-by they saw Gar coming back. And he did not look as if he had been receiving a reprimand; quite the contrary. He came in nearly as impulsively as he used to do in his school-boy days.

'Frank, you were right! The bishop is going to give me a living. Mother, it is true.'

'Of course,' said Frank. 'I always am right.'

'The bishop did not keep me waiting a minute, although I was there before my time. He was very kind, and shook hands with me——'

'But about the living?' cried impatient Frank.

'I am telling you, Frank. The bishop said he had watched us grow up—meaning you, as well—and he felt pleased to tell me that he had never seen anything but good in either of us. But I need not repeat all that. He went on to ask me whether I should be prepared to do my duty zealously in a living, were one given to me. I answered that I hoped I should—and the short and the long of it is, that I am going to be appointed to one.'

'Long live the bishop!' cried Frank. 'Where's the living situated—in the moon?'

'Ah, where indeed? Guess what living it is, mother.'

'Gar dear, how can I?' asked Jane. 'Is it a minor canonry?'

They both laughed. It recalled Jane to her absence of mind. The bishop had nothing to do with the bestowal of the minor canonries. Neither could a minor canonry be called 'a living.'

'Mother, it is Deoffam.'

'Deoffam! Oh, Gar!'

'Yes, it is Deoffam. You will not have to go far away from Helstonleigh, now.'

'I'll lay my court wig that Mr. Ashley has had his fingers in the pie!' cried quick Frank.

But, in point of fact, the gift had emanated from the prelate himself. And a very good gift it was—four hundred a year, and the prettiest parsonage house within ten miles. The brilliant scholarship of the Halliburtons, attained to by their own unflagging industry, the high character they had always borne, had not been lost upon the Bishop of Helstonleigh. Gar's conduct as a clergyman had been exemplary; Gar's preaching was of no mean order; and the bishop deemed that such a one as Gar ought not to be overlooked. The day has gone by for a bishop to know nothing of the younger clergy of his diocese, and he of Helstonleigh had got Gar Halliburton down in his preferment book. It is just possible that the announcement of his name in the local papers, as having helped to marry his brother at Deoffam, may have put that particular living in the bishop's head. Certain it was, that a few hours after the bishop read it, he ordered his carriage, and went to pay a visit at Deoffam Hall. During his stay he took Mr. Ashley's arm, and drew him out on the terrace, very much as though he wished to take a near view of the peacock.

'I have been thinking, Mr. Ashley, of bestowing the living of Deoffam upon Edgar Halliburton. What should you say to it?'

'That I should almost feel it as a personal favour paid to myself,' was the reply of Mr. Ashley.

'Then it is done,' said the bishop. 'He is young, but I know a great many older who are less deserving.'

'Your lordship may rely upon it that there are few men, young or old, who are so intrinsically deserving as the Halliburtons.'

'I know it,' said the bishop. 'They interested me as lads, and I have watched them ever since.'

And that is how Gar became vicar of Deoffam.

'You will be trying for a minor canonry, now, Gar, I suppose, living so convenient for it,' observed Jane.

'Mrs. Halliburton, will you be so kind as not to put foreign notions in his head?' interrupted Frank. 'The Reverend Gar must look out for a canonry; not a minor. And he won't stop there. When I am on the woolsack, in my place in the Lords, Gar may be opposite to me, a spiritual peer!'

Jane laughed, as did Frank. Who knew, though? It all lay in the future.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A DYING CONFESSION.

Meanwhile William Halliburton and his wife had crossed the Channel. Amongst other letters written to convey news of them home, was the following. It was written by Mary to Mrs. Ashley, after they had been abroad a week or two.

'Hotel du Chapeau Rouge, Dunkerque,
September 24th.

'My Ever Dear Mamma:

'You have heard from William how it was that we altered our intended route. I thought the sea-side so delightful that I was unwilling to leave it, even for Paris, and we determined to remain on the coast, especially as I shall have other opportunities of seeing Paris with William. Boulogne was crowded and noisy, so we quitted it for less frequented towns, staying a day or two in a place. We went to Calais and to Gravelines; also to Bourbourg, and to Cassel—the two latter not on the coast. The view from Cassel—which you must not confound with the Cassel of Germany—is magnificent. We met some English people on the summit of the hill, and they told us the English called it the Malvern of France. I am not sure which affords the finest view, Cassel or Malvern. They say that eighty towns or villages may be counted from it; but I cannot say that we made out anything like so many. We can see the sea in the far distance—as we can, on a clear day, catch a glittering glimpse from Malvern of the Bristol Channel. The view from some of the windows of the Sauvage Hotel was so beautiful that I was never tired of looking at it. William says he shall show me better views when he takes me to Lyons and Annonay, but I scarcely think there can be better. At a short distance rises a monastery of the order of La Trappe, where the monks never speak, save the "memento mori" when they meet each other. Some of the uses of the hotel were primitive; they gave us table-spoons in our coffee cups for breakfast.

'From Cassel we came to Dunkerque, and are staying at the Chapeau Rouge, the only large hotel in the place. The other large hotel was made into a convent some time back: both are in the Rue des Capucins. It is a fine and very clean old fortified town, with a statue of Jean Bart in the middle of the place. Place Jean Bart, it is called; and the market is held in it, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, as it is at Helstonleigh. Such a crowded scene on the Saturday! and the women's snow-white caps quite shine in the sun. I cannot tell you how much I like to look at these old Flemish towns! By moonlight, they look exactly

like the towns you are familiar with in the old pictures. There is a large basin here, and a long harbour and pier. One English lady, whom we met at the table d'hote, said she had never been to the end of the pier yet, and she had lived in Dunkerque four years. It was too far for a walk, she said. The country round is flat and poor, and the lower classes mostly speak Flemish.

'On Monday we went by barge to a place called Bergues, four miles off. It was market day there, and the barge was crowded with passengers from Dunkerque. A nice old town with a fine church. They charged us only five sous for our passage. But I must leave all these descriptions until I get home, and come to what I have chiefly to tell you.

'There is a piece of enclosed ground here, called the Parc. On the previous Saturday, which was the day we first arrived here, I and William were walking through it, and sat dawn on one of the benches facing the old tower. I was rather tired, having been to the end of the pier—for its length did not frigthen us. Some one was seated at the other end of the bench, but we did not take particular notice of her. Suddenly she turned to me, and spoke: "Have I not the honour of seeing Miss Ashley?" Mamma, you may imagine my surprise. It was that Italian governess of the Dares, Mademoiselle Varsini as they used to call her. William interposed: I don't think he liked her speaking to me. I suppose he thought of that story about her, which came over from Germany. He rose and took me on his arm to move away "Formerly Miss Ashley," he said to her: "now Mrs. Halliburton." But William's anger died away—if he had felt any—when he saw her face I cannot describe to you how fearfully ill she looked. Her cheeks were white, and drawn, and hollow; her eyes were sunk within a dark circle; and her lips were open and looked black. "Are you ill?" I asked her. "I am so ill that a few days will be the finish of me," she answered. "The doctor gave me to the falling of the leaves, and many are already strewing the grass: in less than a week's time, from this, I shall be lower than they are." "Is Herbert Dare with you?" inquired William—but he has said since that he spoke in the moment's impulse; had he taken thought, he would not have put the question. "No, he is not with me," she answered, in a shrieking angry tone. "I know nothing of him; he is just a vagabond on the face of the earth." "What is it that is the matter with you?" William asked her. "They call it decay," she answered. "I was in Brussels, getting my living by daily teaching. I had to go out in all weathers, and I did not take heed to the colds I caught. I suppose they settled on my lungs." "Have you been in this town long?" we inquired of her. "I came in August," she answered. "The Belgian doctor said if I had a change it might do something for me, and I came here: it was the same to me where I went. But it did me harm instead of good. I got worse directly I came; and the doctor here said I must not move away again, the travelling would injure me. What mattered it? As good die here as elsewhere." That she had death written plainly in her face, was evident; nevertheless, William essayed to say a word of hope to her: but she interrupted him. "There's no recovery for me; I am sure to die; and the time it's to be hoped, will not be long in coming, or my money will not hold out." She spoke in a matter-of-fact tone shocking to hear: and before I could call up any answer, she turned to William. "You are the William Halli—I never could say the name—who was at Mr. Ashley's with Cyril Dare. May I ask where you have descended in Dunkerque?" "At the Chapeau Rouge," replied William. "Then, if I should send there to ask you to come and speak with me, will you come?" she continued. "I have something that I should like to tell you before I die." William informed her we should remain a week; and we wished her good morning and moved away into another walk. Soon afterwards, we saw a Sister of Charity, one of those who go about nursing the sick, come up to her and lead her away. She could scarcely crawl, and halted to take breath between every few steps.

'This, I have told you, was last Saturday. This evening, Wednesday, just as we were rising from table, a waiter came to William and called him out, saying he was wanted. It proved to be the Sister of Charity that we had seen in the park; she told William that Madame Varsini was near death, and had sent her for him. So William went with her, and I have been writing this to you since his departure. It is now ten o'clock, and he is not yet back. I shall keep this open to tell you what she wanted with him. I cannot imagine.

'Past eleven. William has come in. He thinks she will not live over to-morrow. And I have kept my letter open for nothing, for William will not tell me. He says she has been talking to him about herself and the Dares; but that the tale is more fit for papa's ears than for yours or mine.

'My sincerest love to papa and Henry. We are so glad Gar is to be at Deoffam!—and believe me, my dear mamma, to be your ever-loving and dutiful child,

'MARY HALLIBURTON.

'Excuse the smear. I had nearly put "Mary Ashley."'

This meeting described in Mary's letter, must have been one of those remarkable coincidences

that sometimes occur during a lifetime. Chance encounters they are sometimes called! Chance! Had William and his wife not gone to Dunkerque—and they went there by accident, as may be said, for the original plan had been to spend their absence in Paris—they would not have met. Had the Italian lady not gone to Dunkerque when ordered change—and she chose it by accidence, she said—they would not have met. But somehow both parties *were* brought there, and they did meet. It was not chance that led them.

When William went out with the sister, she conducted him to a small lodging in the Rue Nationale, a street not far from the hotel. The accommodation appeared to consist of a small anteroom and a bed-chamber. The Signora Varsini was in the latter, dressed in a peignoir, and sitting in an arm-chair, supported by cushions. A washed-out, faded peignor, possibly the very one she had worn years ago, the night of the death of Anthony Dare. William was surprised; by the sister's account he had expected to find her in bed, almost in the last extremity. But hers was a restless spirit She was evidently weaker, and her breath seemed to come in gasps. William sat down in a chair opposite to her; he could not see very much of her face, for the small lamp on the table had a green shade over it, which cast its gloom on the room. The sister retired to the anteroom and closed the door between with a caution. 'Madame was not to talk much.' For a few moments after the first greeting, she, 'Madame,' kept silence; then she spoke in English.

'I should not have known you. I never saw much of you. But I knew Miss Ashley in a minute. You must have got on well.'

'Yes. I am Mr. Ashley's partner.'

'So! That is what Cyril Dare coveted for himself. Miss Ashley also. "Bah, Monsieur Cyril!" said I sometimes to my mind; "neither the one nor the other for thee." Where is he?'

'Cyril? He is at home. Doing no good.'

'He never do good,' she said with acrimony. 'He Herbert's own brother. And the other one—George?'

'George is in Australia. He has a chance, I believe, of doing pretty well.'

'Are the girls married?'

'No.'

'Not Adelaide!'

'No.'

Something like a smile curled her dark and fevered lips. 'Mademoiselle Adelaide, she was trying after that vicomte. "Bah!" I would say to myself as I did by Cyril, "there's no vicomte for her; he is only playing his game." Does he go there now?'

'Lord Hawkesley? Oh, no. All intimacy has ceased.'

'They have gone down, have they not? They are very poor?'

'I fear they are poor now. Yes, they have very much gone down. May I inquire what it is you want with me?'

'You inquire soon,' she answered, in a resentful tone. 'Do you fear I should contaminate you?—as you feared for your wife on Saturday?'

'If I can aid you in any way I shall be happy and ready,' was William's answer, spoken soothingly. 'I think you are very ill.'

'The doctor was here this afternoon. "Ma chère," said he, "to-morrow will about end it. You are too weak to last longer; the inside is gone."'

'Did he speak to you in that way?—a medical man!'

'He is aware that I know as much about my own state as he does. He might not be so plain with all his patients. Then I said to the sister: "Get me up and make the bed, for I must see a friend"—and I sent her for you. I told you I wanted you to do me a little service. Will you do it?'

'If I can.'

'It is not much. It is this,' she added, drawing from underneath the peignoir a small packet, sealed and stamped, looking like a thick letter. 'Will you undertake to put this surely in the post after I am dead? I do not want it posted before.'

'Certainly I will,' he answered, taking it from her hand, and glancing at the superscription. It was addressed to Herbert Dare at Dusseldorf. 'Is he there?' asked William.

'That was his address the last I heard of him. He is now here, now there, now elsewhere; a vagabond, as I told you, on the face of the earth. He is like Cain,' she vehemently continued. Cain wandered abroad over the earth, never finding rest. So does Herbert Dare. Who wonders? Cain killed his brother; what did *he* do?'

William lifted his eyes to her face; as much of it as was distinguishable under the dark shade cast by the lamp. That she appeared to be in a very demonstrative state of resentment against Herbert Dare, was indisputable.

'He did not kill his brother, at any rate,' observed William. 'I fear he is not a good man; and you may have cause to know that more conclusively than I; but he did not kill his brother. You were in Helstonleigh at the time, mademoiselle, and must remember that he was cleared,' added William, falling into the mode of addressing her used by the Dares.

'Then I say he did kill him.'

She spoke with slow distinctness. William

could only look at her in amazement. Was her mind wandering? She sat glaring at him with her light blue eyes, so glazed, yet glistening; just the same eyes that used to puzzle old Anthony Dare.

'What did you say?' asked William.

'I say that Herbert Dare is a second Cain,' she answered.

'He did not kill Anthony,' repeated William. 'He could not have killed him. He was in another place at the time.'

'Yes. With that Puritan child in the dainty dress—fit attire only for your folles in—what you call the place?—Bedlam! I know he was in another place,' she continued; and she appeared to be getting terribly excited, between passion and natural emotion.

'Then what are you speaking of!' asked William. 'It is an impossibility that Herbert could have killed his brother.'

'He caused him to be killed.'

William felt a nameless dread creeping over him. 'What do you mean?' he breathed.

'I send that letter, which you have taken charge of, to Herbert the bad; but he moves about from place to place, and it may never reach him. So I want to tell you in substance what is written in the letter, that you may repeat it to him when you come across him. He may be going back to Helstonleigh some day; if he not die off first with his vagabond life. Was it not said there, once, that he was dead?'

'Only for a day or two. It was a false report.'

'And when you see him—in case he has not had that packet—you will tell him this that I am now about to tell you.'

'What is its nature?' asked William.

'Will you promise to tell him?'

'Not until I first hear what it may be,' fearlessly replied William. 'Intrust it to me, if you will, and I will keep it sacred: but I must use my own judgment as to imparting it to Herbert Dare. It may be something that would be better left unsaid.'

'I do not ask you to keep it sacred,' she rejoined. 'You may tell it to the world, if you please; you may tell it to your wife: you may tell it to all Helstonleigh. But not until I am dead. Will you give that promise?'

'That I will readily give you.'

'On your honour?'

William's truthful eyes smiled into hers. 'On my honour—if that shall better satisfy you. It was not necessary.'

She remained silent a few moments, and then burst forth vehemently. 'When you see him, that cochon, that vautrien——'

'I beg you to be calm,' interrupted William. 'This excitement must be most injurious to one in your weak state; I cannot sit to listen to it.'

'Tell him,' said she, leaning forward, and speaking in a somewhat calmer tone, 'tell him that it was he who caused the death of his brother Anthony.'

William could but look at her. Was she wandering?

'*I* killed him,' she went on. 'Killed him in mistake for Monsieur Herbert.'

Barely had the words left her lips, when all that had been strange in that past tragedy seemed to roll away like a cloud from William's mind. The utter mystery there had been, as to the perpetrator: the almost impossibility of pointing accusation to any, seemed now accounted for; and a conviction that she was speaking the dreadful truth fell upon him. Involuntarily he recoiled from her.

'He used me ill; yes, he used me ill, that wicked Herbert!' she continued in agitation. 'He told me stories; he was false to me; he mocked at me! He had made me care for him; I cared for him—ah, I not tell you how. And then he turned round to laugh at me. He had but amused himself—pour faire passer le temps!'

Her voice had risen to a shriek; her face and lips grew ghastly, and she began to twitch like one who is going into a convulsion. William grew alarmed, and hastened to her support. He could not help it, much as his spirit revolted from her.

'Y a-t-il quelque chose qu'on peut donner à madame pour la soulager!' he called out hastily to the sister, in his fear.

The woman glided in. 'Mais oui, monsieur. Madame s'agite, n'est-ce pas?'

'Elle s'agite beaucoup.'

The sister poured some drops from a phial into a wine-glass of water, and held it to those quivering lips 'Si vous vous, agitez comme cela, madame, c'est pour vous tuer, savez-vous?' cried she.

'I fear so, too, added William in English to the invalid. 'It would be better for me not to hear this, than for you to put yourself into this state.

She grew calmer, and the sister quitted them. William resumed his seat as before; there appeared to be no help for it, and she continued her tale.'

'I not agitate myself again,' she said. 'I not tell you all the details, or what I suffered: à quoi bon? Pain at morning, pain at mid-day, pain at night; I think my heart turned dark, and it has never been right again——'

'Hush, Mademoiselle Varsini! The sister will hear you.'

'What matter? She not speak English.'

'I really cannot, for your sake, sit here, if you put yourself into this state,' he rejoined.

'You must sit; you must listen! You have promised to do it,' she answered.

'I will, if you will be rationally calm.'

'I'll be calm,' she rejoined, the check having driven back the rising passion. 'The worst is told. Or rather, I do not tell you the worst—that mauvais Herbert! Do you wonder that my spirit was turned to revenge?'

Perceiving somewhat of her fierce and fiery nature, William did not wonder at it. 'I do not know what I am to understand yet,' he whispered. 'Did *you—kill*—Anthony?'

She leaned back on her pillow, clasping her hands before her. 'Ah me! I did! Tell him so,' she continued again passionately; tell him that I killed Anthony—thinking it was *him*.'

'It is a dreadful story!' shuddered William.

'I did not mean it to be so dreadful,' she answered, speaking quite equably. 'No, I did not; and I am telling you as true as though it were my confession before receiving the *bon dieu*. I only meant to wound him——'

'Herbert?'

'Herbert! Of course; who else but Herbert?' she retorted, giving token of another relapse. 'Had I cause of anger against that pauvre Anthony? No, no. Anthony was sharp with the rest sometimes, but he was always civil to me; I never had a misword with him. I not like Cyril; but I not dislike George and Anthony. Why, why,' she continued, wringing her hands, 'did Anthony come forth from his chamber that night and go out, when he said he had retired to it for good? That is where all the evil arose.'

'Not all,' dissented William, in a low tone.

'Yes, all,' she sharply repeated. 'I had only meant to give Mr. Herbert a little prick in the dark, just to repay him, to stop his pleasant visits to that field for a term. I never thought to kill him. I liked him better than that, ill as he was behaving to me. I never thought to kill him; I never thought much to hurt him. And it would not have hurt Anthony, but that he was what you call tipsy, and fell on the point of the——'

'Scissors?' suggested William, for she had stopped. How could he, even with this confession before him, speak to a lady—or one who ought to have been a lady—of any uglier weapon?'

'I had something by me sharper than scissors. But never you mind what. That, so far, does not matter. The little hurt I had intended for Herbert he escaped; and poor Anthony was killed.

There was a long pause. William broke it, speaking out his thoughts impulsively.

'And yet you went to Rotterdam afterwards to make friends with Herbert!'

'When he write and tell me there good teaching in the place, could I know it was untrue? Could I know that he would borrow all my money from me? Could I know that he turn out a worse——'

'Mademoiselle, I pray you, be calm.'

'There, then. I will say no more. I have outlived it. But I wish him to know that that fine night's work was *his*. It was the right man who lay in prison for it. The letter I have given you may never reach him; and I ask you tell him, for his pill, should it not.'

'Then you have never hinted this to him?' asked William.

'Never. I was afraid. Will you tell him?'

'I cannot make the promise. I must use my own discretion. I think it is very unlikely that I shall ever see him.'

'You meet people that you do not look for. Until last Saturday, you might have said it was unlikely that you would meet me.'

'That is true.'

Now that the excitement of the disclosure was over, she lay back in a grievous state of exhaustion. William rose to leave, and she held out her hand to him. Could he shun it—guilty as she had confessed herself to him? No. Who was he, that he should set himself up to judge her? And she was dying!

'Can nothing be done to alleviate your sufferings?' he inquired in a kindly tone.

'Nothing. The sooner death comes to release me from them, the better.'

He lingered yet, hesitating. Then he bent closer to her, and spoke in a whisper.

'Have you thought much of that other life? Of the necessity of repentance—of the seeking earnestly the pardon of God?'

'That is your Protestant fashion,' she answered with equanimity. 'I have made my confession to a priest, and he has given me absolution. A good, fat old man he was, very kind to me; he saw how I had been tossed and turned about in life. He will bring the *bon dieu* to me the last thing, and cause a mass to be said for my soul.'

'I thought I had heard you were a Protestant.'

'I was either. I said I was a Protestant to Madame Dare. But the Roman Catholic religion is the most convenient to take up when you are passing. Your priests say they cannot pardon sins.'

The interview occupied longer in acting than it has in telling, and William returned to the hotel to find Mary tired, wondering at his absence, and a letter to Mrs. Ashley—which you have been favoured with the sight of—lying on the table, awaiting its conclusion.

'You are weary, my darling. You should not have remained up.'

'I thought you were never coming, William I thought you must have gone off by the London steamer, and left me here! The hotel omnibus took some passengers to it at ten o'clock.'

William sat down on the sofa, and drew her to him; the full tide of thankfulness going up from his heart that all women were not as the one he had just left.

'And what did Mademoiselle Varsini want with you, William? Is she really dying?'

'I think she is dying. You must not ask me what she wanted, Mary. It was to tell me something—to speak of things connected with herself and the Dares. They would not be pleasant to your ears.'

'But I have been writing an account of all this to mamma, and have left her letter open, to send word what the governess could have to say to you. What can I tell her?'

'Tell her as I tell you, my dearest: that what I have been listening to is more fit for Mr. Ashley's ears than for yours or hers.'

Mary rose and wrote rapidly the concluding lines. William stood and watched her. He laughed at the 'smear.'

'I am not familiar with my new name yet; I was signing "Mary Ashley."'

'Would you go back to the old name, if you could?' cried he, somewhat saucily.

'Oh, William!'

Saturday came round again: the day they were to leave—just a week since they came, since the encounter in the park. They were taking an early walk in the market, when certain low sounds, as of chaunting, struck upon their ears. A funeral was coming along; it had just turned out of the great church of St. Eloi, at the other corner of the Place. Not a wealthy funeral—quite the other thing. On the previous day they had seen a grand interment, attended by its distinguishing marks; seven or eight banners, as many priests. Some sudden feeling prompted William to ask whose funeral this was, and he made the inquiry of a shopkeeper, who was standing at her door.

'Monsieur, c'est l'enterrement d'une étrangère. Une Italienne l'on dit: Madame Varsini.'

'Oh, William! do they bury her already?' was the shocked remonstrance of Mary. 'It was only yesterday at mid-day the sister came to you to say she had died. What a shame!'

'Hush, love! Many of the people here understand English. They bury quickly in these countries.'

They stood on the pavement, and the funeral came quickly on. One black banner borne aloft in a man's hand, two boys in surplices with lighted candles, and the singing priest with his open book. Eight men, in white corded hats and black cloaks, bore the coffin on a bier, and there was a sprinkling of impromptu followers—as there always is to these foreign funerals. As the dead was borne past him on its way to the cemetery, William, following the usage of the country, lifted his hat, and remained uncovered until it had gone by.

And that was the last of Bianca Varsini.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DOWNFALL OF THE DARES.

It was a winter's morning, and the family party round the breakfast table at William Halliburton's looked a cheery one, with their adjuncts of a good fire and good fare. Mr. and Mrs. Ashley and Henry were guests. And I can tell you that in Mr. Ashley they were entertaining no less a personage than the high sheriff of the county.

The gentlemen nominated for sheriffs, that year, for the county of Helstonleigh, whose names had gone up to the Queen, were as follows:

Humphrey Coldicott, Esquire, of Coldicott Grange;

Sir Harry Marr, Bart., of the Lynch;

Thomas Ashley, Esquire, of Deoffam Hall;

And Her Majesty had been pleased to prick the latter name.

The gate of the garden swung open, and some one came hastily round the gravel path to the house. Mary, who was seated at the head of the table, facing the window, caught a view of the visitor.

'It is Mrs. Dare!' she exclaimed.

'Mrs Dare!' repeated Mr. Ashley, as a peal at the hall-bell was heard. 'Nonsense, child!'

'Papa, indeed it is.'

'I think you must be mistaken, Mary,' said her husband. Mrs Dare would scarcely be abroad at this early hour.'

'Oh, you disbelievers all!' laughed Mary. 'As if I did not know Mrs. Dare! She was looking scared and flurried.'

Mrs. Dare, looking indeed scared and flurried, came into the breakfast parlour. The servant had been showing her into another room, but she put him aside, and appeared amidst them.

What brought her there? What had she come to tell them? Alas! of their unhappy downfall.

How the Dares had contrived to go on so long, without the crash coming, they alone knew. They had promised to pay here, they had promised to pay there; and people, tradespeople especially, did not much like to begin compulsory measures to old Anthony Dare, he who had for so long swayed his sway in Helstonleigh. His professional business had almost entirely left him—perhaps because there was no efficient head to carry it on. Cyril was just what Mademoiselle had called Herbert, a vagabond; and Cyril was an irretrievable one. No good to the business was he—not half as much good as he was to the public-houses. Mr. Dare, with white hair, stooping form, and dim eyes, would go creeping to his office most days; but his memory was leaving him and it was evident to all that he was relapsing into his second childhood. Latterly they had lived entirely by privately disposing of their portable effects—as Honey Fair used to do when it fell out of work. They owed money everywhere; rent, taxes, servants' wages, large debts, small debts—it was universal. And now the landlord had put in his claim after the manner of landlords, and it had brought on the climax. They were literally without resource; they knew not where to turn; they had not a penny piece, or the worth of it, in the wide world. Mrs. Dare, in the alarm occasioned by the unwelcome visitor—for the landlord's man had made good his entrance that morning—came flying off to Mr. Ashley, some extravagant hope floating in her mind that help might be obtained from him.

'Here's trouble! Here's trouble!' she exclaimed by way of salutation, wringing her hands frantically.

They rose in consternation, believing she must have gone wild. William handed her a chair.

'There, don't come round me,' she cried, as she flung herself into it. 'Go on with your breakfast. I have concealed our troubles until I am heart-sick, and now they can be concealed no longer, and I have come for help to you. Don't press anything upon me, Mrs. William Halliburton; to attempt to eat would choke me!'

She sat there and entered on her grievances. How they had long been without money, had lived by credit, and by pledging things out of their house; how they owed more than she could tell; how that a 'horrible man' had come into their house that morning, an emissary of the landlord.

'What are we to do?' she wailed. 'Will you help us? Mr. Ashley, will you?—your wife is my husband's cousin, you know. Mr. Halliburton, will you help us? Don't you know that I have a right to claim kindred with you! Your father and I were first cousins, and lived for some time under the same roof.'

William remembered the former years when she had not been so ready to own the relationship. He remembered the day when Mr. Dare had put a seizure into their house, and his mother had gone, craving grace of him. Mr. Ashley remembered it, and his eye met William's. How marvellously had the change been brought round! the right come to light!

'What is it that you wish me to do?' inquired Mr. Ashley. 'I do not understand.'

'Not understand!' she sharply echoed, in her grief. 'I want the landlord paid out. You have ample means at command, Mr. Ashley, and might do this much for us.'

A modest request, certainly! The rent due was for three years—considerably more than two hundred pounds Mr. Ashley replied to it quietly.

'A moment's reflection might convince you, Mrs. Dare, that the paying of this money would be fruitless waste. The instant this procedure gets wind—and in all probability it has already done so—other claims, as pressing, will be enforced.'

'Tradespeople must wait,' she answered, with irritation.

'Wait for what?' asked Mr. Ashley; 'do you expect to drop into a fortune?'

Wait for what, indeed! For complete ruin? There was nothing else to wait for. Mrs. Dare sat beating her foot against the carpet.

'Mr. Dare has grown useless,' she said. 'What he says one minute, he forgets the next; he is nearly in a state of imbecility. I have no one to turn to, no one to consult with, and therefore I come to you Indeed, you must help me.'

'But I do not see what I can do for you,' rejoined Mr. Ashley. 'As to paying your debts—it is—it is—in fact, it is not to be thought of. I have my own payments to make, my expenses to keep up. I could not do it, Mrs. Dare.'

She paused again, playing nervously with her bonnet strings.

'Will you go back with me, and see what you can make of Mr. Dare? Perhaps between you something to be done may be fixed upon. I don't understand things.'

'I cannot go back with you,' replied Mr. Ashley. 'I must attend the meeting which takes place this morning in the Guildhall.'

'In your official capacity,' remarked Mrs. Dare, in not at all a pleasant tone of voice. 'I forgot that you preside at it. How very grand you have become!'

'Very grand, indeed, I think, considering the low estimation in which you held the glove manufacturer, Thomas Ashley,' he answered, with a

good-humoured laugh. 'I will call upon your husband in the course of the day, Mrs. Dare.'

She turned to William.

'Will you return with me? I have a claim upon you,' she reiterated eagerly.

He shook his head.

'I accompany Mr. Ashley to the meeting.'

She was obliged to be satisfied, turned abruptly, and left the room, William attending her to the door.

'What d'ye call that?' asked Henry, lifting his voice for the first time.

'Call it?' repeated his sister.

'Yes, Mrs. Mary, call it. Cheek, I should say.'

'Hush, Henry,' said Mr. Ashley.

'Very well, sir. It's cheek all the same, though.'

As Mr. Ashley surmised, the misfortune had already got wind, and the unhappy Dares were besieged in their house that day by clamorous creditors. When Mr. Ashley and William arrived there, for they walked up at the conclusion of the public meeting, they found Mr. Dare seated alone in the dining-room; that sad dining-room which had witnessed the tragical end of Anthony. He cowered over the fire, his thin hands stretched out to the blaze. He was not altogether childish—but his memory failed, and he was apt to fall into fits of wandering. Mr Ashley drew forward a chair, and sat down by him.

'I fear things do not look very bright,' he observed. 'We called in at your office as we came by, and found a seizure was also put in there.'

'There's nothing much for 'em to take but the desks,' returned old Anthony.

'Mrs. Dare wished me to come and talk matters over with you, to see whether anything could be done. She does not understand them, she said.'

'What *can* be done—when things come to such a pass as this?' returned Anthony Dare, lifting his head sharply. 'That's just like women—"seeing what's to be done!" I am beset on all sides. If the bank sent me a present of three or four thousand pounds, we might get on again. But it won't, you know. The things must go—and we must go. I suppose they'll put me in prison; they'll get nothing by doing it.'

He leaned forward and rested his chin on his stick, which was stretched out before him as usual. Presently he resumed, his eyes and words alike wandering:

'He said the money would not bring us good if we kept it. And it has not; it has brought a curse. I have told Julia so twenty times since Anthony went. Only the half of it was ours, you know, and we took the whole.'

'What money?' asked Mr. Ashley, wondering what he was saying.

'Old Cooper's. We were at Birmingham when he died, I and Julia. The will left it all to her, but he charged us——'

Mr. Dare suddenly stopped. His eye had fallen on William. In these fits of wandering he lost his memory partially, and mixed things and people together, in the most inextricable confusion.

'Are you Edgar Halliburton?' he went on.

'I am his son. Do you not remember me, Mr. Dare?'

'Ay, ay. Your son-in-law,' nodding to Mr Ashley. 'But Cyril was to have had that place, you know. He was to have been your partner.'

Mr. Ashley made no reply. It might not have been understood. And Mr. Dare resumed, confounding William with his father.

'It was hers in the will, you know, Edgar, and that's some excuse, for we had to prove it. There was not time to alter the will, but he said it was an unjust one, and charged us to divide the money; half for us, half for you; to divide it to the last halfpenny. And we took it all. We did not mean to take it, or to cheat you, but somehow the money went; our expenses were great, and we had heavy debts, and when you came afterwards to Helstonleigh and died, your share was already broken into, and it was too late. Ill-gotten money brings nothing but a curse, and that money brought it to us. Will you shake hands and forgive?'

'Heartily,' replied William, taking his wasted hand.

'But you had to struggle, and the money would have kept struggle from you. It was many thousands.'

'Who knows whether it would or not?' cheerily answered William. 'Had we possessed money to fall back upon, we might not have struggled with a will; we might not have put out all the exertion that was in us, and then we should never have got on as we have done.'

'Ay; got on. You are looked up to now; you have become gentlemen. And what are my boys? The money was yours.'

'Dismiss it entirely from your regret, Mr. Dare,' was the answer of William, given in true compassion. 'I believe that our not having had it may have been a benefit to us in the long run, rather than a detriment. The utter want of money may have been the secret of our success.'

'Ay,' nodded old Dare. 'My boys should have been taught to work, and they were only taught

to spend. We must have our luxuries in-doors, forsooth, and our show without; our servants and our carriages, and our confounded pride. What has it ended in?'

What had it! They made no answer. Mr. Dare remained still for a while, and then lifted his haggard face, and spoke in a whisper, a shrinking dread in his face and tone.

'They have been nothing but my curses. It was through Herbert that she, that wicked foreign woman, murdered Anthony.'

Did he know of *that*? How had the knowledge come to him? William had not betrayed it, save to Mr. Ashley and Henry. And they had buried the dreadful secret down deep in the archives of their breasts. Mr. Dare's next words disclosed the puzzle.

'She died, that woman. And she wrote to Herbert on her death-bed, and made a confession. He sent a part of it on here, lest, I suppose, we might be for doubting him still. But his conduct led to it. It is dreadful to have such sons as mine!'

His stick fell to the ground. Mr. Ashley laid hold of him, while William picked it up. He was gasping for breath.

'You are not well,' cried Mr. Ashley.

'No—I think I am going. One can't stand these repeated shocks. Did I see Edgar Halliburton here? I thought he was dead. Is he come for his money?' he continued in a shivering whisper. 'We acted according to the will, sir; according to the will, tell him. He can see it in Doctors' Commons. He can't proceed against us—he has no proof—let him go and look at the will.'

'We had better leave him, William,' murmured Mr. Ashley. Our presence only excites him.'

In the opposite room sat Mrs Dare. Adelaide passed out of it as they entered. Never before had they remarked how sadly worn and faded she looked. Her later life had been spent in pining after the chance of greatness she had lost, in missing the Viscount Hawkesley. Irrevocably lost to her; for the daughter of a neighbouring earl now called him husband. They sat down by Mrs. Dare, but could only condole with her; nothing but the most irretrievable ruin was around.

'We shall be turned from here,' she wailed. 'How are we to find a home—to get a living?'

'Your daughters must do something to assist you,' replied Mr. Ashley. 'Teaching, or——'

'Teaching! in this overdone place!' she interrupted.

'It has been somewhat overdone in that way, certainly, of late years,' he answered. 'If they cannot get teaching, they may find some other employment. Work of some sort.'

'Work! shrieked Mrs. Dare. 'My daughters *work!*'

'Indeed, I don't know what else is to be done,' he answered. 'Their education has been good, and I should think they may obtain daily teaching; perhaps sufficient to enable you to live quietly. I will pay for a lodging for you, and give you a trifle towards housekeeping, until you can turn yourselves round.'

'I wish we were all dead!' was the response of Mrs. Dare.

Mr. Ashley went a little nearer to her. 'What is this story your husband has been telling about the misappropriation of the money that Mr Cooper desired should be handed to Edgar Halliburton?'

She clapped her hands upon her face with a low cry. 'Has he been betraying *that*? What will become of us?—what shall we do with him? If ever a family was beaten down by fate, it is ours.'

Not by gratuitous fate, thought Mr. Ashley. Its own misdoings have brought the fate upon it. 'Where is Cyril?' he asked aloud. 'He ought to bestir himself to help you, now.'

'Cyril!' echoed Mrs Dare, a bitter scowl rising to her face. '*He* help us! You know what Cyril is.'

As they went out, they met Cyril. What a contrast the two cousins presented side by side!—he and William might be called such. The one—fine, noble, intellectual; his countenance setting forth its own truth, candour, honour; making the best, in his walk of life, of the talents entrusted to him by God. The other—slouching, dirty, all but ragged; his offensive doings shown too plainly in his bloated face, his red eyes, his unsavoury breath: letting his talents and his days run to worse than waste; a burden to himself and to those around him. And yet, in their boyhood's days, how great had been Cyril's advantages over William Halliburton's!

They walked away arm-in-arm. William and Mr Ashley. A short visit to the manufactory in passing, and then they continued their way home, taking it purposely through Honey Fair.

Honey Fair! Could *that* be Honey Fair? Honey Fair used to be an unsightly and unodoriferous place, where the mud, the garbage, and the children ran riot together, a species, in short, of sapiencious pigsty. But look at it now. The paths are nice and well kept, the road clean and cared for. Her Majesty's state coach-and-eight might drive down, and the horses not have to tread gingerly. The houses are the same; small and large they bear evidence of care, of thrift, of a respect-

able class of inmates. The windows are no longer stuffed with rags, or the palings broken. And that little essay—the assembling at Robert East's, and William Halliburton—had led to the change.

The men and women had been awakened to self-respect; to the obligation of striving to live well and to do well; to the solemn thought that there is another world after this, where their works, good or bad, would follow them. They had learned to reflect that it *might* be possible that one phase of a lost soul's punishment after death, will lie in remembering the duties it ought to have performed in life. They knew, without any effort of reflection, that it is a remembrance which makes the sting of many a deathbed. Formerly, Honey Fair had believed (those who thought about it.) that their duties in this world and any duties which lay in preparing for the next, were as wide apart as the two poles. Of that they had now learned the fallacy. Honey Fair had grown serene. Children were taken out of the streets to be sent to school; the Messrs. Bankes had been discarded, for the women had grown wiser; and, for all the custom the 'Horned Ram' obtained from Honey Fair, it might have shut itself up In short, Honey Fair had been awakened, speaking in a moderate point of view, to enlightenment; to the social improvements of an improving and a thinking age.

This was a grand day with Honey Fair, as Mr. Ashley and William knew, when they turned to walk through it. Mr. Ashley had purchased that building you have heard of, for a comparative trifle, and made Honey Fair a present of it It was very useful. It did for their schools, their night meetings, their provident clubs; and to-night a treat was to be held in it. The men expected that Mr. Ashley would look in, and Henry Ashley had sent round his chemical apparatus to give them some experiments, and had bought a great magic lantern. The place was now called the 'Ashley Institute.' Some thought—Mr Ashley did—that the 'Halliburton Institute' would have been more consonant to fact; but William had resolutely withstood it. The piece of waste land behind it had been converted into a sort of playground and garden. The children were not watched in it incessantly, and screamed after—'You'll destroy those flowers!' 'You'll break that window!' 'You are tearing up the young shrubs!' No; they were made to understand that they were *trusted* not to do these things; and they took the trust to themselves, and were proud of it. Believe me, you may train a child to do this, if you will.

As they passed the house of Charlotte East, she was turning in at the garden gate; and, standing at the window, dandling a baby, was Caroline Mason. Caroline was servant to Charlotte now, and that was Charlotte's baby; for Charlotte was no longer Charlotte East, but Mrs. Thorneycroft. She curtsied as they came up.

'Good afternoon, gentlemen. I have been round to the rooms to show them how to arrange the evergreens. I hope they will have a pleasant evening!'

'They!' echoed Mr. Ashley. 'Are you not coming yourself?'

'I think not, sir. Adam and Robert will be there, of course, but I can't well leave the baby.'

'Nonsense, Charlotte!' exclaimed William. 'What harm will the baby take? Are you afraid of its running away?'

'Ah, sir, you don't understand babies yet.'

'That has to come,' laughed Mr. Ashley.

'I understand enough of babies to pronounce that one a most exacting baby, if you can't leave it for an hour or two,' persisted William. 'You must come, Charlotte. My wife intends to be there.'

'Well, sir—I know I should like it Perhaps I can manage to run round for an hour, leaving Caroline to listen.'

'How does Caroline go on?' inquired Mr. Ashley.

'Sir, there never was a better young woman went into a house. That was a dreadful lesson to her, and it has taught her what nothing else could. I believe that Honey Fair will respect her in time.'

'My opinion is, that Honey Fair would not be going far out of its way to respect her now,' remarked William. 'Once a false step is taken, it is very much the fashion to go tripping over others. Caroline, on the contrary, has been using all her poor endeavours ever since to retrieve that first.'

'I could not wish a better servant,' said Charlotte. 'Of course, I could not keep a servant for housework alone, and Caroline nearly earns her food helping me at the gloves. I am pleased, and she is grateful. Yes, sir, it is as you say—Honey Fair ought to respect her. It will come in time.'

'As most good things do, that are striven for in the right way,' remarked Mr. Ashley.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ASSIZE TIME.

Once more, in this, the nearly concluding chapter of the history, are we obliged to take notice of assize Saturday. Once more had the

high sheriff's procession gone out to receive the judges; and never had the cathedral bells rung out more clearly, never had the streets and windows been so crowded.

A blast, shrill and loud, from the advancing heralds, was borne on the air of the bright March afternoon, as the cavalcade advanced up East Street. The javelin-men rode next, two abreast, in the plain dark Ashley livery, the points of their javelins glittering in the sunshine, hardly able to advance for the crowd. Little cared they to-day for the proud trumpets, for the javelin-bearers, for the various attractions that made their delight on other of these days; they cared but for that stately equipage in the rear. Not for its four prancing horses, for its shining silver ornaments, for its portly coachman on the hammer-cloth, not even for the very judges themselves; but for the master of that carriage, the high sheriff, Thomas Ashley.

He sat in it, its only plainly attired inmate. The scarlet robes, the flowing wigs of the judges, were opposite to him; beside him were the rich black silk robes of his chaplain, the vicar of Deolfam. A crowd of gentlemen on horseback followed—a crowd that Helstonleigh had rarely seen. William was one of them. The popularity or non-popularity of a high sheriff may be judged of from the number of his attendants, when he goes out to meet the judges. Half Helstonleigh had put itself on horseback that day, to do honour to Thomas Ashley.

Occupying a conspicuous position in the street were the Ashley workmen. Clean and shaved, they had surreptitiously conveyed their best coats to the manufactory; and, with the first peal of the college bells, they had rushed out, dressed—every soul—leaving the manufactory alone in its glory, and Samuel Lynn to take care of it. The shout they raised, as the sheriff's carriage drew near, deafened the street. It was out of all manner of etiquette or precedence to cheer the sheriff when in attendance on the judges; but who could be angry with them? Not Mr. Ashley. Their lordships looked out astonished. One of the judges you have met before—Sir William Leader; the other was Mr. Justice Keene.

The judges gazed from the carriage, wondering what the shouts could mean. They saw a respectable looking body of men—not respectable in dress only, but in face—gathered there, bareheaded, and cheering the carriage with all their might and main.

'What can that be for?' cried Mr. Justice Keene.

'I believe it must be meant for me,' observed Mr. Ashley, taken by surprise as much as the judges were. 'Foolish fellows! Your lordships must understand that they are the workmen belonging to my manufactory.'

But his eyes were dim as he leaned forward and acknowledged the greeting. Such a shout followed upon it! The judges, used to shouting as they were, had rarely heard the like, so deep and heartfelt.

'There's genuine good feeling in that cheer,' said Sir William Leader. 'I like to hear it. It is more than lip deep.'

The dinner party for the judges that night was given at the deanery. Not a more honoured guest had it than the high sheriff. His chaplain was with him, and William and Frank were also guests. What did the Dares think of the Halliburtons now?

The Dares, just then, were too much occupied with their own concerns to think of them at all. They were planning how to get to Australia. Their daughter, Julia, more dutiful than some daughters might prove themselves, had offered an asylum to her father and mother, if they would go out to Sydney. Her sisters, she wrote word, would find good situations there as governesses—probably in time find husbands.

They were wild to go. They wanted to get away from mortifying Helstonleigh, and to try their fortunes in a new world. The passage money was the difficulty. Julia had not sent it, possibly not supposing they were so very bad off; she did not know yet of the last finish to their misfortunes. How could they scrape together even enough for the cheapest class, the steerage? Mr. Ashley's private belief was that he should have to furnish it. Ah—he was a good man.

Sunday morning rose to the ringing again of the cathedral bells—bells that do not condescend to ring, save on rare occasions—telling that it was some day of note in Helstonleigh. It was a fine day, sunny, and very warm for March, and the glittering east window reflected its colours upon a crowd, such as the cathedral had rarely seen assembled within its walls for divine service, even on those thronging days, assize Sundays.

The procession extended nearly all the long way from the grand entrance gates to the choir, passing through the body and the nave. The high sheriff's men, standing so still, their formidable javelins in rest, had enough to do to retain their places, from the pressure of the crowd behind, as they kept the line of way. The bishop in his robes, the clergy in their white garments and scarlet or black hoods, the long line of college boys in their surplices, the lay-clerks, yet in white. Not (as you were told of yesterday) on them; not on the mayor and corporation, with their chains and gowns, not on the grey-wigged judges, their fiery trains held up behind, glaring exposure of eyes on other days, was the attention of the

crowd fixed; but on him who walked, calm, dignified, quiet, in immediate attendance on the judges—their revered fellow-citizen, Thomas Ashley. In attendance on him was his chaplain, his black gown, so contrasting with the glare and glitter, marking him out conspicuously.

The organ had burst forth as they entered the great gates, simultaneously with the ceasing of the ringing bells, which had been sending their melody over the city. With some difficulty places were found for those of note, but many a score stood that day. The bishop had gone on to his throne—and opposite to him, in the archdeacon's stall, the appointed place for the preacher on assize Sundays, sat the sheriff's chaplain. Sir William Leader was shown to the dean's stall—Mr. Justice Keene to the sub dean's—the dean sitting next the one, the high sheriff next the other. William Halliburton was in a canon's stall; Frank—handsome Frank—got a place amidst many other barristers. And in the ladies' pew, underneath the dean, seated with the dean's wife, were Mrs. Ashley, her daughter, and Mrs. Halliburton.

The Rev. Mr. Keating chanted the service, putting out his best voice to do it. They had that fine anthem, 'Behold, God is my salvation.' Very good were the services and the singing that day. The dean, the prebendary in residence, and Mr. Keating, went to the communion table for the commandments, and thus the service drew to an end. As they were conducted back to their stall, a verger with his silver mace cleared a space for the sheriff's chaplain to ascend the pulpit stairs, the preacher of the day.

How the college boys gazed at him! But a short while before, speaking comparatively, he had been one of them, a college boy himself, some of the seniors (juniors then) had been school-fellows with him. Now he was the Rev. Edgar Halliburton, standing there, chief personage for the moment in that cathedral. To the boys' eyes he seemed to look dark; save on assize Sundays, they were accustomed to see only white robes in that pulpit.

'Too young to give us a good sermon,' thought half the congregation, as they scanned him. Nevertheless, they liked his countenance; it had a grave, earnest look. He gave out his text, a verse from Ecclesiastes—

'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'

Then he leaned a little forward on the cushion; and after a pause, began his sermon, which lay before him, and worked out the text.

It was an admirable discourse, very practical; but you will not care to have it recapitulated for you, as the local newspapers recapitulated it. Remembering what the bringing up of the Halliburtons had been, it was impossible that Gar's sermons should not be practical; and the congregation began to think they had been mistaken in their estimate of what a young man could do. He told the judges where their duty lay, as fearlessly as he told it to the college boys, as he told it to all; he told them that the golden secret of success and happiness in this life, lay in the faithful and earnest performance of the duties that crowded on their path, striving on unweariedly, whatsoever those duties might be, whether pleasant or painful; *joined to implicit reliance on and trust in God*. A plainer sermon was never preached; in manner he was remarkably calm and impressive, and the tone of his voice was quiet and persuasive, just as if he were speaking to them. He was listened to with breathless interest throughout; even those gentry, the college boys, were for once beguiled into listening to a sermon. Jane's tears were dropping incessantly, and she had to let down her white veil to hide them; like that day, years ago, when she had let down her black crape veil to hide them, in the office of Anthony Dare. Different tears this time.

The sermon lasted just half an hour, and it had seemed but a quarter of one. The bishop then rose and gave the blessing, and the crowds began to file out. As the preacher was being marshalled by a verger through the choir to take his place in the procession next the high sheriff, Mr. Keating met him and grasped his hand.

'You are all right, Gar,' he whispered, 'and I am proud of having educated you. That sermon will tell home to some of the drones.'

'I knew he'd astonish 'em!' ejaculated Dobbs, who had walked all the way from Deoffam to see the sight, to hear her master preach to the cathedral, and had fought out a place for herself right in front of the pulpit. 'His sermons bain't filled up with bottomless pits, as is never full enough, like them of some preachers be.'

That sermon and the Rev. Edgar Halliburton were talked of much in Helstonleigh that day.

But ere the close of another day the town was ringing with the name of Frank. He had led—he, Frank Halliburton! A cause of some importance was tried in the *Nisi Prius* Court, in which the defendant was Mr. Glenn, the surgeon. Mr. Glenn, who had liked Frank from the hour he first conversed with him that evening at his house, now so long ago—a conversation at which you had the pleasure of assisting—who had also the highest opinion of Frank's abilities in his profession, had made it a point that his case

should be intrusted to Frank; Mr. Glenn was not deceived; Frank led admirably, and his eloquence quite took the spectators by storm. What was of more importance, it told upon Mr. Justice Keene and the jury, and Frank sat down in triumph and won his verdict.

'I told you I should do it, mother,' said he quietly when he reached Deoffam that night, after being nearly smothered with congratulations. 'You will live to see me on the woolsack yet.'

Jane laughed. She often had laughed at the same boast. She was alone that evening; Gar was attending the high sheriff at an official dinner at Helstonleigh.

'Will no lesser prize content you, Frank?' asked she, jestingly. Say, for example, the solicitor-generalship?'

'Yes, as a stepping-stone.'

'And you still get on well? seriously speaking now, Frank.'

'First rate,' answered Frank. 'This day's work will be the best lift for me, though, unless I am mistaken. I had two fresh briefs pushed into my hands as I sat down,' he added, going off in a laugh. 'See if I make this year less than a thousand!'

'And the next thing, I suppose, you will be thinking of getting married?'

The bold barrister actually blushed.

'What nonsense, mother—marry, and lose my fellowship!'

'Frank, it is so. I see it in your face. You must tell me who it is.'

'Well, as yet it is no one. I must wait until my eloquence, as they called it to-day in court, is more an assured fact with the public, and then I may speak out to the judge. She means waiting for me, though, so it is all right.'

'Tell me, Frank,' repeated Jane; 'who is "she?"'

'Maria Leader.'

Jane looked at him doubtingly.

'Not sir William's daughter?'

'His second daughter.'

'Is not that rather too aspiring for Frank Halliburton?'

'Maria does not think so. I have been aspiring all my life, mother; and so long as I work on for it honourably and uprightly, I see no harm in being so.'

'No, Frank—good instead of harm. How did you become acquainted with her?'

'Her brother and I are chums; have been ever since we were at Oxford. Bob is at the Chancery bar, but he has not much house for it—not half the clever man that his father was. His chambers are next to mine, and I often go home with him. The girls make a great deal of us, too. That is how I first knew Maria.'

'Then I suppose you see something of the judge?'

'Oh, dear,' laughed Frank; 'the judge and I are upon intimate terms in private life; quite cronies. You would not think it, though, if you saw me bowing before my lord when he sits in his big wig. Sometimes I fancy he suspects.'

'Suspects what?'

'That I and Maria would like to join cause together. But I don't mind if he does. I am a favourite of his. The very Sunday before we came on circuit, he asked me to dine there. We went to church in the evening, and I had Maria under my wing; Sir William and Lady Leader trudging on before us.'

'Well, Frank, I wish you success. I don't think you would choose any but a nice girl, a good girl——'

'Stop a moment, mother; you will meet the judge to-morrow night, and you may then picture Maria. She is as like him as two peas.'

'How old is she, Frank?'

'Two-and-twenty. *I* shall have her. He was not always the great Judge Leader, you know, mother—and he knows it. And he knows that everybody must have a beginning, as he and my lady had it. For years after they were married he did not make five hundred a year, and they had to live upon it. He does not fear to revert to it, either; he often talks of it to me and Bob—a sort of hint, I suppose, that folks do get on in time, by dint of patience. You will like Sir William Leader.'

Yes—Jane would meet Sir William on the following night, for that would be the evening of the grand entertainment given by the high sheriff to the judges at Deoffam Hall.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE HIGH SHERIFF'S DINNER PARTY.

William Halliburton drove his wife over in the pony carriage in the afternoon; they would dress and sleep at Deoffam. They went early—and in driving past Deoffam vicarage, who should be at the gate looking out for them, but Anna. Not Anna Lynn now, but Anna Gurney.

'William, William, there's Anna!' Mary exclaimed. 'I will get out here.'

He assisted her down, and they remained talking with Anna. Then William asked what he was to do—wait with the carriage for Mary, or drive on to the hall, and walk back for her?

'Drive to the hall,' said Mary, who wished to stay a little while with Anna. 'But, William,' she added, as he got in, 'don't let my box go into the stables.'

'With all the finery,' laughed William.

'It contains my dinner dress,' Mary explained to Anna. 'Have you been here long?'

'This hour, I think,' replied Anna. 'My husband had business a mile or two further on, and drove me here. What a nice garden this is. See—I have been picking Gar's flowers.'

'Where is Mrs. Halliburton?' asked Mary.

'Dobbs called her in to settle some dispute in the kitchen. I know Dobbs is a great tyrant over that new housemaid.'

'But now tell me about yourself, Anna,' said Mary, drawing her down on a garden bench. 'I have scarcely seen you since you were married. How do you like being your own mistress?'

'Oh, it's charming!' cried Anna, with all her old childish natural manner. 'Mary, what dost thee think? Charles lets me sit without my caps.'

Mary laughed.

'To the great scandal of Patience!'

'Indeed, yes. One day Patience called when we were at dinner. I had not got so much as a bit of cap on, and Patience she looked so cross—but she said nothing, for the servants were in waiting. When they had left the room she told Charles that she was surprised at his allowing it—that I was giddy enough and vain enough, and it would only make me worse. Charles smiled—he was eating walnuts; and what dost thee think he answered? He—but I don't like to tell thee,' broke off Anna, covering her face with her pretty hands.

'Yes, yes, Anna, you must tell me.'

'He told Patience that he liked to see me without the caps, and there was no need for my wearing them until I should have children old enough to set an example to.

Anna took off her straw bonnet as she spoke, and her curls fell down to shade her blushing cheeks. Mary wondered whether the 'children' would have lovely faces like their mother. She had never seen Anna look so well. For one thing, she had rarely seen her so well dressed. She wore a stone-coloured corded silk, glistening with richness, and a beautiful white shawl that must have cost no end of money.

'I should always let my curls be seen, Anna,' said Mary; there *can* be no harm in it.'

'No, that there can't, as Charles does not think so,' emphatically answered Anna. 'Mary,' dropping her voice to a whisper, 'I want Charles not to wear those straight coats any more. He shakes his head at me and laughs; but I think he will listen to me.'

Seeing what she did of the change in Anna's dress, Mary thought so too. Not but Anna's things were still cut sufficiently in the old form to bespeak her sect: as they, no doubt, always would be.

'When art thee coming to spend the day with me, as thee promised?' asked Anna.

'Very soon: when this assize bustle shall be over.'

'How gay you will all be to-night!'

'How formal, you mean,' said Mary. 'To entertain judges when on circuit, and bishops and deans, is more formidable than pleasant. It is a state dinner to-night. When I saw papa this morning, I inquired whether we were to have the javelin-men on guard in the dining-room.'

Anna laughed. 'Do Frank and Gar dine there?'

'Of course. The high sheriff could not give a dinner without his chaplain at mamma's hand to say grace,' returned Mary, laughing.

William came back; and they all remained nearly for the rest of the afternoon, Jane regaling them with tea. It was scarcely over when Mr. Gurney drove up in his carriage: a large, open carriage, with a seat for the groom behind, the horses very fine ones. He came in for a few minutes; a very pleasant man of nearly forty years; a handsome man also. Then he took possession of Anna, carefully assisted her up, took the seat beside her, and the reins, and drove off.

William started for the Hall with Mary, walking at a brisk pace. It was not ten minutes' distance, but the evening was getting on. Henry Ashley met them as they entered, and began upon them in his crossest tone.

'Now, what have you two got to say for yourselves? Here, I expect you, Mr. William, to pass the afternoon with me; the mother expects Mary; and nothing arrives but a milliner's box! And you make your appearance when it's pretty near time to go up to embellish!'

'We stayed at the vicarage, Henry; and I don't think mamma could want me. Anna Gurney was there.'

'Rubbish to Anna Gurney! Who's Anna Gurney, that she should upset things. I wanted William, and that's enough. Do you think you are to have the entire monopolising of him, Mrs. Mary, just because you happen to have married him?'

Mary went behind her brother, and playfully put her arms round his neck. 'I will lend him to you now and then, if you are good,' she whispered.

'You idle, inattentive girl! The mother wanted

you to cut some hot-house flowers for the dinner-table.'

'Did she? I will do it now.'

'Hark at her! Do it now! when it has been done this blessed hour past; William, I don't intend to show to-night.'

'Why not?' asked William.

'It is a nuisance to change one's things; and my side's not over clever to day; and the ungrateful delinquency of you two has put me out of sorts altogether,' answered Henry, making up his catalogue. 'Condemning one to vain expectation, and to fret and fume over it! I shan't show; William must represent me.'

'Yes, you will show,' replied William. 'For you know that your not doing so would vex Mr. Ashley.'

'A nice lot *you* are to talk about vexing! You don't care how you vex me.'

William gently took him by the arm. 'Come along to your room now, and I will help you with your things. Once ready, you can do as you like about appearing.'

'You treat me just like a child,' grumbled Henry. 'I say, do the judges come in their wigs?'

Mary burst into a laugh.

'Because that case of stuffed owls had better be ordered out of the hall. The animals may be looked upon as personal.'

'I hope there's a good fire in your room, Henry.'

'There had better be, unless the genius which presides over the fires in this household would like to feel the weight of my displeasure.'

Mary went to find her mother; she was in her chamber, dressing.

'My dear child, how late you are!'

'There's plenty and plenty of time, mamma We stayed at the parsonage. Anna Gurney was there. Henry says he is not very well.'

'He says that always when William disappoints him. He will be all right now you are come. Go into your room, my dear, and I will send Sarah to you.'

Mary was ready, and the maid gone, before William left Henry to come and dress on his own score. Mary wore a white silk, with emerald ornaments.

'Shall I do, William?' asked she, when William came in.

'Do!' he answered, running his eyes over her. 'No!'

'Why, what's the matter with me?' she cried, turning hurriedly to the great glass.

'This.' He took her in his arms, and kissed her passionately. 'My darling wife! You will never "do" without that.'

It was not a formidable party at all, in defiance of Mary's anticipations. The judges, divested of their flowing wigs and flaming robes, looked just like other men. Jane liked Sir William Leader, as Frank had told her she would; and Mr. Justice Keene was an easy, talkative man, fond of a good joke and a good dinner. Mr. Justice Keene seemed uncommonly to admire Mary Halliburton; and—there could be no doubt of it, and I hope the legal bench won't look grave at the reflection—seemed very much inclined to get up a flirtation with her over the coffee. Being a judge, I think the bishop ought to have read him a reprimand.

Standing at one end of the room, their coffee-cups in hand, were Sir William Leader, the Dean of Helston eigh, Mr. Ashley, and his son. They were talking of the Halliburtons. Sir William knew a good deal of their history from Frank.

'It is most wonderful!' Sir William was remarking. 'Self-educated, self-supporting, and to be what they are!'

'Not altogether self-educated,' dissented the dean; 'for the two younger, the barrister and clergyman, were in the school attached to my cathedral; but self-educated in a great degree. The eldest, my friend's son-in-law, never had a lesson in the classics subsequent to his father's death, and there's not a more finished scholar in the county.'

'The father died and left them badly provided for,' remarked Sir William.

'He did not leave them provided for at all, Sir William,' corrected Mr. Ashley. 'He left nothing, literally nothing, but the furniture of the small house they rented; and he left some trifling debts. Poor Mrs. Halliburton turned to work with a will, and not only contrived to support them, but brought them up to be what you see—lofty-minded, honourable, educated men.'

The judge turned his eyes on Jane. She sat on a distant sofa, talking with the bishop. So quiet, so lady-like, nay—so attractive—she looked still, in the rich pearl-grey dress worn at William's wedding; not in the least like one who has had to toil hard for bread.

'I have heard of her—heard of her worth from Frank,' he said, with emphasis. 'She must be one in a thousand.'

'One in a million, Sir William,' burst forth Henry Ashley. 'When they were boys, you could not have bribed them to do a wrong thing: neither temptation nor anything else turned them from the right. And they would not be turned from the right now, if I know anything of them.'

The judge walked up to Jane, and took the seat by her, just vacated by the bishop.

'Mrs. Halliburton,' said he, 'you must be proud of your sons.'

Jane smiled. 'I have latterly been obliged to take myself to task for being so, Sir William,' she answered.

'To task! I wish I had three such sons to take myself to task for being proud of,' was the answer 'Not that mine are to be complained of; but they are not like these.'

'Do you think Frank will get on?' she asked him.

'It is no longer a question. He has begun to rise in an unusually rapid manner. I should not be surprised if, in after years, he may find the very highest honours opening to him.'

Again Jane smiled. 'He has been in the habit of telling us that he looks forward to rule England as Lord Chancellor.'

The judge laughed. 'I never knew a newly-fledged barrister who did not indulge that vision,' said he. 'I know I did. But there are really not many Frank Halliburtons. So, sir,' he continued, for Frank at that moment passed, and the judge pinned him, 'I hear you cherish dreams of the Woolsack.'

'To look at it in the distance is not high treason, Sir William,' was Frank's ready answer.

'Why, what do you suppose *you* would do on the Woolsack, if you got there?' cried Sir William.

'My duty, I hope, Sir William. I would try hard for it.'

Sir William loosed him with an amused expression, and Frank passed on. Jane began to think Frank's dream—not of the Woolsack, but of Maria Leader—not so very improbable a one.

'I have heard of your early struggles,' said the judge to her, in a low tone. 'Frank has talked to me. How you could have borne up, and done long-continued battle with them, I cannot imagine!'

'I never could have done it but for one thing,' she answered: 'my trust in God. Times upon times, Sir William, when the storm was beating about my head, I had no help or comfort in the wide world: I had nothing to turn to but that. I never lost my trust in God.'

'And therefore God stood by you,' remarked the judge, in a low tone.

'And *therefore* God stood by me, and helped me on. I wish,' she added, earnestly, 'that all the world could learn that same great lesson that I have learnt. I have—I humbly hope I have—been enabled to teach it to my boys. I have tried to do it from their very earliest years.'

'Frank shall have Maria,' thought the judge to himself. 'They are an admirable family The young chaplain should have another of the girls if he'd like her.'

What was William thinking of, as he stood a little apart, with his serene brow and his thoughtful smile? His mind was back in the past. That long-past night, following on the day of his entrance to Mr. Ashley's manufactory, was present to him, when he had lain down in despair, and sobbed out his bitter grief. 'Bear up, my child,' were the words his mother had comforted him with; 'only do your duty, and trust implicitly in God.' And when she had gone down, and he could get the sobs from his heart and throat, he made the resolve to do as she told him—at any rate, to try and do it. And he kneeled down there and then, and asked to be helped to do it. And, from that hour to this, William had never known the trust to fail. Success? Yes, they had reaped success—success in no measured degree. Be you very sure that it was born of that great trust. Oh!—as Jane had just said to Sir William Leader—if all the world could but learn this wonderful truth!

'BECAUSE HE HATH SET HIS LOVE UPON ME, THEREFORE WILL I DELIVER HIM: I WILL SET HIM UP, BECAUSE HE HATH KNOWN MY NAME.'

THE END.

Date Due

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